

# THE STRAITS TIMES

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Anti-Brexit activists outside Parliament in London yesterday, after lawmakers voted 432 to 202 against British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal, the country's worst parliamentary defeat in modern history. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

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was, strangely, celebrated by both sides – hardcore Brexiteers who thought the deal did not go far enough in severing ties with the EU, and pro-EU activists who saw the vote as a setback for Brexit itself.

There were conflicting signals coming out from within the EU.

A French presidency official said the EU would not budge on Brexit principles, while German Chancellor Angela Merkel did not rule out further clarifying Britain's future ties to the bloc.

A spokesman for European Council President Donald Tusk said that the vote had increased the risk of a disorderly exit, and that while the EU did not want that to happen, it would be prepared for it.

"The EU27 will remain united and responsible as we have been throughout the entire process, and will seek to reduce the damage caused by Brexit. We will continue our preparations for all outcomes, including a no-deal scenario," said the spokesman.

And while German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier hinted that Britain could be given an extension, key Brexit negotiator Guy Verhofstadt said that any extension would not go past the European Parliament elections in May.

"What we will not let happen, deal or no deal, is that the mess in British politics is again imported into European politics," he wrote on Twitter.

For now, both the ruling Conservative Party and opposition Labour Party made clear that neither wants Brexit without a deal.

Responding to the defeat in Parliament on Tuesday, Mrs May said: "To those who fear the government's strategy is to run down the clock to March 29: That is not our strategy. I have always believed the best way forward is to leave in an orderly way with a good deal, and have devoted much of the last two years to negotiating such a deal."

Likewise, Mr Corbyn said "no-deal must be taken off the table". Observers in Singapore were not so sanguine.

"As it becomes harder to predict the future of the UK market and the rules it will play by, companies have to be prepared for the worst-case scenario – a no-deal Brexit," said Mr Ho Meng Kit, chief executive officer of the Singapore Business Federation.

charlyong@sph.com.sg

## Brexit vote plunges UK into uncertainty

• Biggest parliamentary defeat • No-confidence vote triggered • Cross-party talks if May stays

**Charissa Yong**

Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit proposal was so overwhelmingly rejected on Tuesday that it plunged Britain into deeper uncertainty while raising hopes that the government might be forced to explore alternative approaches, in-

cluding pushing back the March 29 deadline for leaving the European Union to avoid crashing out without a deal.

The pound rallied immediately after British lawmakers voted 432 to 202 against Mrs May's deal, the country's worst parliamentary defeat in modern history.

"The two big takeaways for mar-

kets from this are that, one, this deal is dead and, two, lawmakers might have to explore other creative options to avoid a no-deal Brexit," Mr Timothy Graf, the London-based head of macro strategy at State Street Global Advisors, told Reuters.

British finance chief Philip Hammond floated the possibility of de-

laying the departure beyond the March 29 deadline in a conference call with main British business lobby groups and technology giant executives an hour after the vote, reported Bloomberg.

Mrs May's government faced a vote of no confidence this morning, Singapore time, but most observers said it was unlikely to be toppled.

Should she survive, she has promised to hold cross-party talks to identify "genuinely negotiable" Brexit approaches that can get sufficient support in Parliament and return to the EU for renegotiations.

That seems difficult, with different factions pulling in different directions.

The vote against Mrs May's Brexit deal reflected the deep disagreements on a compromise plan that could win majority support, with her own party divided on the shape of any final deal to leave the EU, while 71 lawmakers of the opposition Labour Party urged their leader Jeremy Corbyn to swing behind a second referendum on remaining a part of the EU.

Meanwhile, the red lines that Mrs May has drawn over leaving the Customs union and having an open border with EU member Ireland have made it impossible to get her deal approved thus far.

Still, the result of Tuesday's vote

## Ex-religious teacher and student issued Restriction Orders



**Hariz Baharudin**

A former Singaporean religious teacher and his student who held radical beliefs promoting violence and views harmful to Singapore's harmony have been issued with Restriction Orders (ROs) under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

Murad Mohd Said, 46, was placed on an RO on Dec 5 last year, making him the first person who was once accredited as a religious teacher to be issued with an order under the ISA.

He was a freelance religious teacher until he was struck off the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) in May last year for his segregationist ideologies that contravened its code of ethics.

His student, 56-year-old technician Razali Abas, was arrested in September last year and placed on

an RO in October.

The Ministry of Home Affairs said yesterday that Murad was issued with an RO because he propagated beliefs promoting violence and views detrimental to the cohesion of Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious society.

It said he had taught his students that it was compulsory to kill apostates – defined broadly as non-believers, those who have renounced the religion as well as Sufis and Shi'ites, both of which are minority groups in the Muslim community.

He had taught that Muslims were allowed to defend themselves by waging "armed jihad" against "infidels who persecuted them". Murad also encouraged his students to withdraw from Singapore's secular society, disregard secular laws and adhere to the rulings of syariah law instead, MHA said in a statement.

The ministry added: "Investigations revealed that Murad progressively became more outspoken in his propagation of segregationist and violent teachings over the years as he wanted to counter views that were opposed to his."

The Straits Times understands that Murad was the principal of Madrasah Al-Arabiah Al-Islamiah from 2004 to 2006.

Razali was introduced to Murad's teachings in 2012 and attended his classes, said MHA. The "exclusivist religious teachings" in the lessons made Razali more susceptible to other radical and violent influences that he later found on social media.

Over time, he became convinced that it was legitimate to kill those who he felt were oppressors of Islam, including non-Muslims, said MHA. Razali began to seek out people with "militant-looking" profiles on Facebook, viewing them as heroes. Razali was issued with an RO "to prevent him from continuing his downward spiral into extremism".

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) said in a separate statement that it and the ARS board had spoken to Murad about his divisive views, but he did not change them. He was struck off the ARS register and barred from conducting classes, but Murad continued spreading his views online.

As the authorities investigated Razali, they discovered Murad's teachings had influenced him. It was then that they deemed Murad's case to be serious enough for him to be placed on a RO.

Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam told reporters yesterday that the actions against Mu-

rad showed the Government's readiness to act against those who threaten society. "If you are a religious teacher, and you preach violence and tell your students it is okay to go and kill non-Muslims, that is an absolute no-no, it crosses many red lines," he said.

Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Masagos Zulkifli and Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu said the actions of the misguided few should not tar the good name of the Muslim community.

A person on an RO cannot move house, change job or travel abroad without official approval. He also cannot issue public statements or join organisations without approval, and usually continues to undergo rehabilitation, like counselling.

harizbah@sph.com.sg

**SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A10**

THREAT TO SOCIETY

If you are a religious teacher, and you preach violence... that is an absolute no-no, it crosses many red lines.

“

**HOME AFFAIRS AND LAW MINISTER**  
K. SHANMUGAM, on the action against a formerly accredited religious teacher.

## New council to spur board gender diversity

A new council has been formed to get more women on the boards of companies and organisations in Singapore.

The Council for Board Diversity was announced by President Halimah Yacob yesterday at the Istana. It will take over from the existing Diversity Action Committee, which was formed in 2014 and focused on Singapore Exchange-listed companies.

It will have an expanded scope to look into female representation on the boards of organisations in the public sector and people sector, which includes non-governmental organisations, voluntary welfare organisations and charities.

Madam Halimah will be the patron of the council, which will be co-chaired by Singapore Exchange chief executive Loh Boon Chye and National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre chairman Mildred Tan.

**SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A8**

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# 10 must-reads for today

**1 Nairobi hotel siege over**  
Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said yesterday that the gunmen who stormed an upmarket hotel complex in Nairobi had been "eliminated" after an almost 20-hour siege in which hundreds of civilians were rescued. The attack, which killed 14 people, was claimed by Al-Qaeda-linked Somali group Al-Shabaab. **WORLD A27**



A woman in tears after identifying the body of a relative who was killed in the hotel siege in Nairobi. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

**2 Two held under ISA**

Two people have been issued with Restriction Orders under the Internal Security Act for holding radical beliefs promoting violence and views detrimental to Singapore's cohesion. Former religious teacher Murad Mohd Said, 46, and his student, technician Razali Abas, 56, were arrested in September last year.

**TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

**4 Japan-S. Korea ties worsen**

Animosity between South Korea and Japan looks set to worsen in the lead-up to the 100th anniversary of Korea's independence movement against Japanese rule on March 1, as diplomatic spats over issues such as comfort women and forced wartime labour have deepened in recent months. **WORLD A12**

**5 Hard choices on surrogacy**

Though acceptable in some Western societies, Singapore has to find its own balance between allowing parents surrogacy arrangements while preventing abuse of this practice, says reporter Yuen Sin (below). **OPINION A30**



**6 Addicts to get longer rehab**

Hardened drug addicts will go through longer and more intensive programmes at the Drug Rehabilitation Centre following changes to the law to let them undergo repeated rehabilitation rather than serve prison time. The centre said it reviews its programmes regularly. **HOME B1**

**7 Fewer mynahs, less noise**

The noise level of the squawking Javan mynahs in Potong Pasir has been greatly reduced, as their numbers have dwindled from 2,800 at the end of December to about 300 now. About 300 trees in the neighbourhood have been pruned to nudge the birds to fly to trees away from residential areas. **HOME B4**

**8 Insurance for Grab drivers**

Ride-hailing platform Grab has launched a free medical leave insurance scheme for drivers who frequently use its service, to protect them against loss of earnings. This comes on the back of recommendations by a tripartite work group on self-employed persons. **BUSINESS C1**

**9 Triathlete's duathlon bid**

National triathlete Phoebe Kee has won several local races but is looking forward to Sunday's launch of the association's new national high-performance duathlon programme. She is stronger in running than swimming and hopes to switch to the run-bike-run sport and qualify for the year-end SEA Games in the Philippines. **SPORT C10**

**10 BTS fever in Singapore**

A dance crew which focuses on teaching the choreography of BTS is one of the many activities initiated by local fans of the K-pop boyband. In the lead-up to BTS' sold-out concert at the National Stadium on Saturday, some fans have pooled resources to dress up a private tour bus with pictures of BTS members on both sides. **LIFE D7**

## What it should have been

In yesterday's report, "PSA posts 7% rise in TEUs handled last year", we said PSA posted a 7 per cent increase in volume last year. It should be 9.1 per cent.

We are sorry for the error.

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VIDEO

**Wild weather**

Singapore experienced its eighth warmest year in 2018, with record temperatures, especially last December. Here is a look at other temperamental weather conditions that were seen last year.

<http://str.sg/hothothot>



VIDEO

**'Dangerous' fruit**

A cannonball tree fruit was seized by Customs officers in China from a traveller returning from Singapore because they thought it could "explode". Find out more about this pungent fruit.

<http://str.sg/cannonball>

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Prime Minister Theresa May making a statement in the House of Commons on Tuesday after MPs rejected her Brexit deal. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

### News analysis

# No good alternatives now that deal is dead

### Chief threat to May likely from her own Cabinet ministers, not from Parliament



**Jonathan Eyal**

Global Affairs  
Correspondent  
In London

British Prime Minister Theresa May suffered the biggest and most humiliating defeat ever recorded by a British government after Parliament rejected her deal for Britain's departure from the European Union by a margin of 230 MPs in the 650-member-strong House of Commons.

It is now difficult to see how she can resurrect her plan for Brexit, as the process of Britain's separation from the European Union is universally known.

The options facing her are bleak, and a way out remains as elusive as ever.

The 599-page EU withdrawal agreement concluded in November between Britain and the European Union – governing all aspects of Britain's future relationship with the EU – encountered difficulties from the moment it was published and was always predicted to fail in Parliament.

But the scale of its rejection – it was supported by only 202 MPs and opposed by no less than 432 in the vote held on Tuesday night in London – is unprecedented in the records of British Parliament. To make matters worse, more than one in three of Mrs May's own ruling Conservative Party broke ranks with her and voted to reject the Brexit deal.

However, the same Conservatives who rebelled against Mrs May will return to the fold and vote to keep the government in power, largely because all opinion polls indicate that a volatile electorate is unlikely to give any party a decisive new mandate in new elections.

Mrs May's chief threat, therefore, does not necessarily come from Parliament, but from her own Cabinet ministers, who could force her out in the next few days, simply because they conclude that her political authority has melted away. Under existing parliamentary procedures, she has only until Monday to outline what Britain's future options are.

Initially, Mrs May hoped that if the defeat in Parliament was modest – by, say, only 50 to 60 MPs turning against her – she could go to the European Union to demand better terms for Brexit and resubmit the “improved” deal to Parliament.

But since the Brexit agreement

was rejected by such a huge majority, it is difficult to see how the document can be resurrected or tweaked – it is, to all intents and purposes, dead.

Yet, with just over two months left before Britain automatically leaves the European Union even if no deal is in place, other EU governments have no intention of renegotiating a new separation agreement.

In his first reactions to the results of the British parliamentary vote, French President Emmanuel Macron pointedly rejected renegotiations, claiming that Europe “already went as far as it could”.

None of the choices facing Mrs May is particularly appealing.

One option the British Prime Minister has is to aim for a more modest free trade deal with the EU, of the kind Norway currently enjoys.

The snag is that Britain is more than 10 times as big as Norway, so copying that arrangement will not easy.

Furthermore, Norway allows EU citizens to settle and work freely on its territory, while Prime Minister May is determined to reimpose border controls. Besides, there is no certainty that even a Norway-style arrangement would be acceptable to the British Parliament.

The alternative approach for breaking the current political logjam is to hold another referendum and let the people of Britain decide what Brexit deal they want.

But the problem here is that the only way Prime Minister May can get Parliament to agree to a new referendum is if the British electorate is also given a second opportunity to decide the basic question of whether it wants to leave Europe, and Mrs May is determined to avoid posing that question, for it would split her own ruling Conservatives.

In private, European Union leaders have told London that they are prepared to extend the period of negotiations beyond the current deadline of March 29, provided the British know what they want, and can outline a way forward.

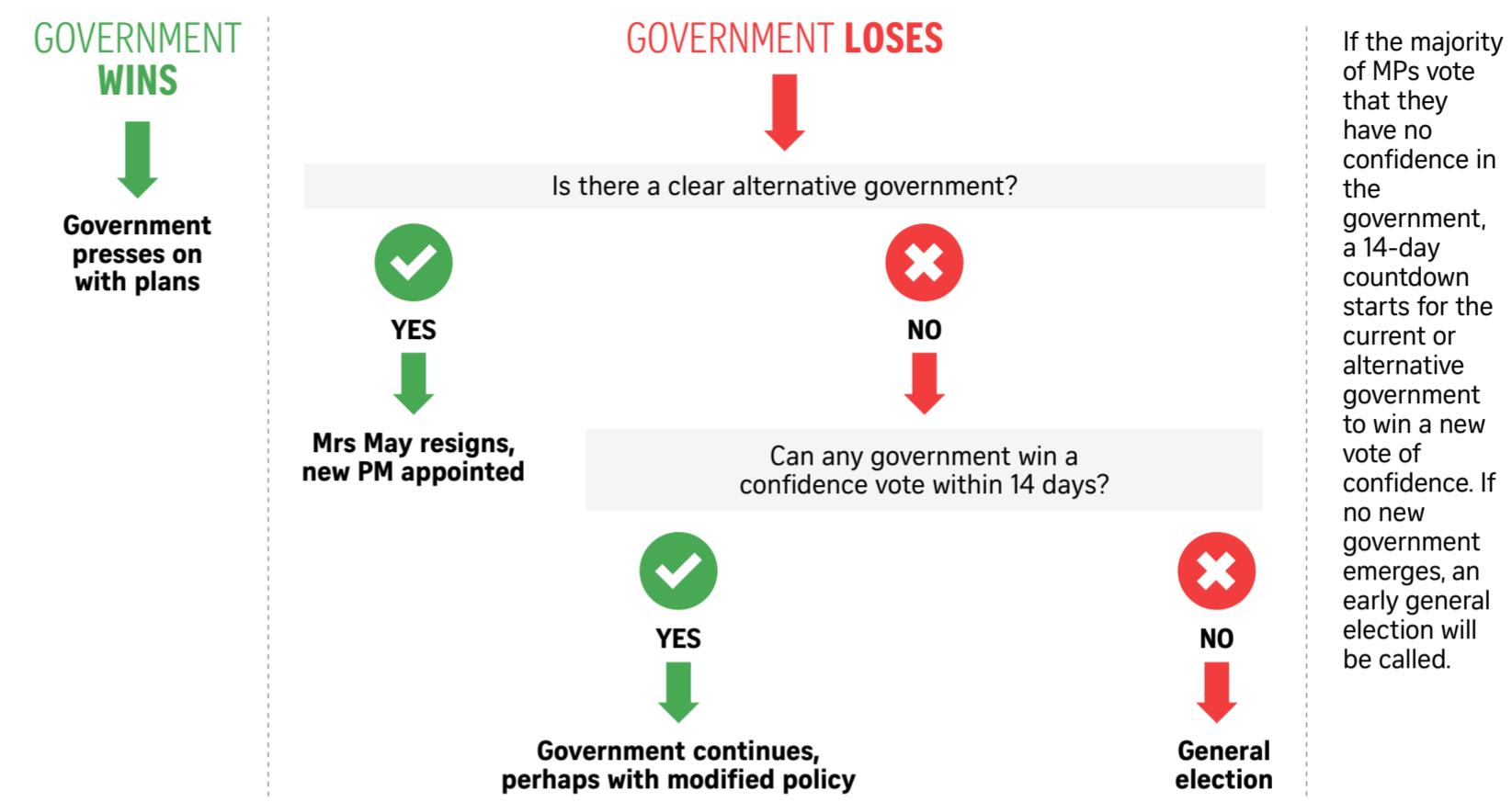
There is no doubt where top EU officials hope all this debate is going: “If a deal is impossible, and no one wants no deal, then who will finally have the courage to say what the only positive solution is?” tweeted EU President Donald Tusk, in a clear hint that the continent's preference is for Britain to abandon its quest to leave the EU.

But at least for the moment, no clear answer is expected from London, where politicians remain far too busy debating the merits of various alternative Brexit schemes, few of which are feasible.

jonathan.eyal@gmail.com

### What's next for Brexit

British MPs have voted against Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal, prompting opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn to call for a vote of no confidence in the government. If the government survives, it has several options for pursuing Brexit. If it loses, the country could go to the polls in a general election.



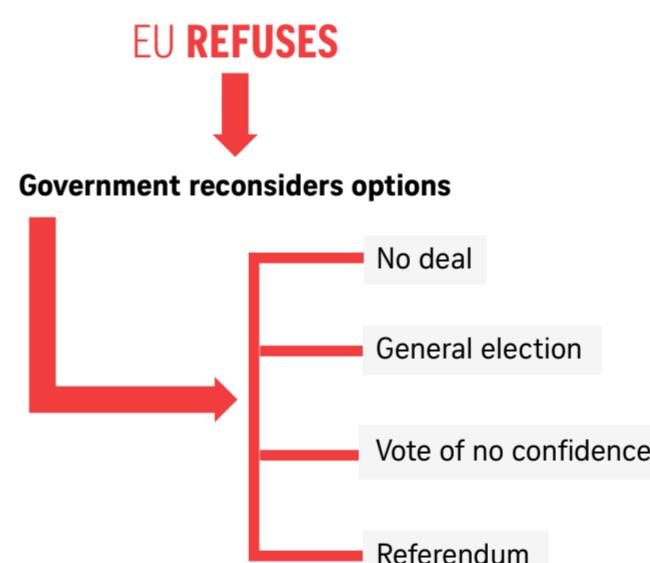
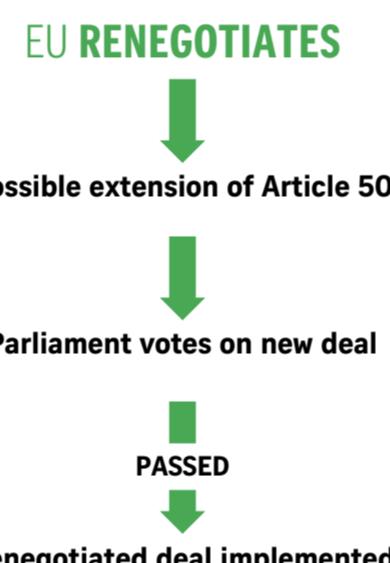
### BREXIT OPTIONS

#### 1 NO-DEAL BREXIT

- Crashing out of the European Union (EU) on March 29 without a deal has been billed as the doomsday scenario that could trigger a recession in Britain and

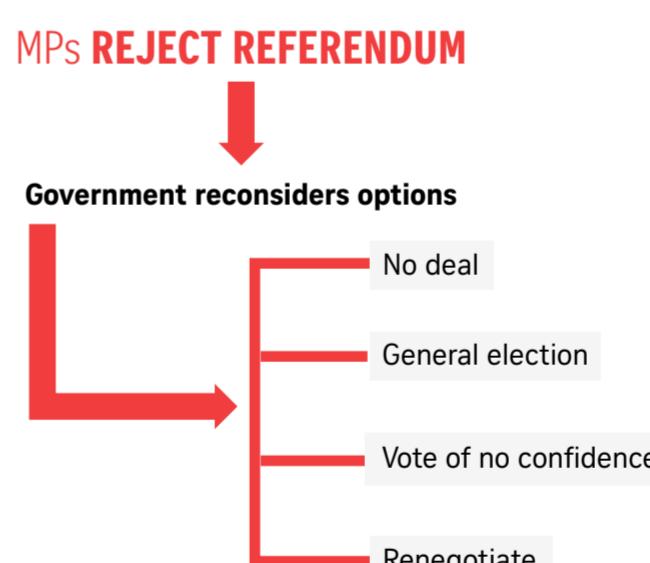
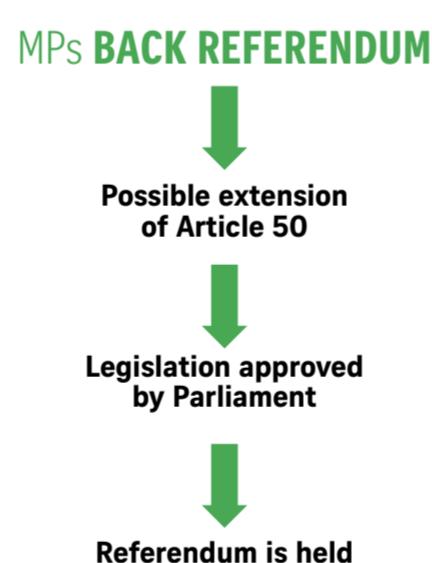
slow Europe's growth. Possible disruptions within Britain include severe delays at the country's ports, higher tariffs on goods and a shortage of medicine.

#### 2 RENEGOTIATE BREXIT DEAL



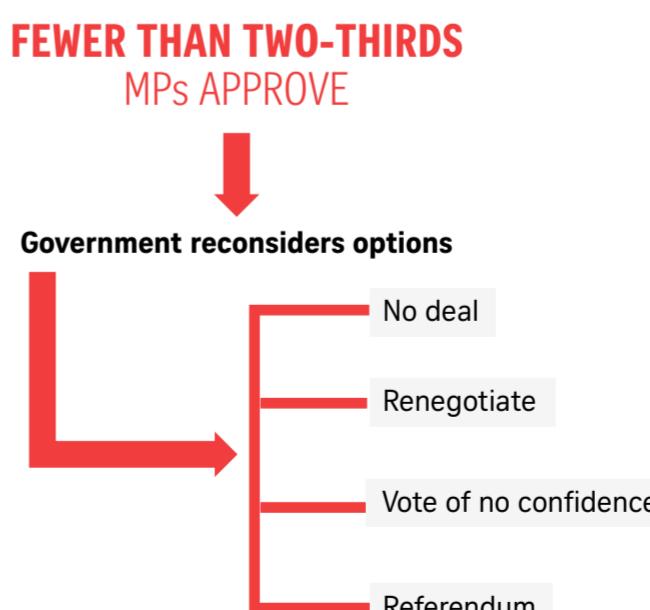
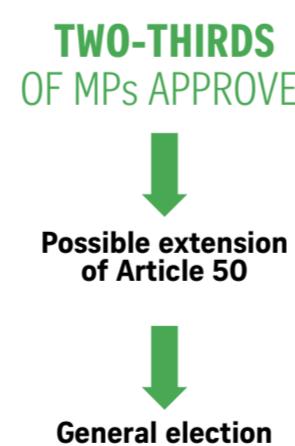
The government would have to seek major changes to the deal if it wants the terms approved by MPs. This will require time, and a possible extension to the March 29 Brexit date. The EU had indicated it will not re-enter negotiations; if it stands firm, the government will have to pursue other options.

#### 3 ANOTHER REFERENDUM



The government could go back to the people and hold another referendum on whether Britain should exit the EU. This could prove as divisive as the first referendum in 2016, when 52 per cent voted Leave. It will require an extension of Article 50, which has set the March 29 deadline, and MPs' approval.

#### 4 A GENERAL ELECTION



PM Theresa May could decide an early election may secure her the simple majority of 320 MPs needed to push the Brexit deal through Parliament. A two-thirds majority, however, is needed to support the early election.

#### 5 OTHER POSSIBILITIES

- Britain can unilaterally revoke Article 50 and cancel Brexit
- Mrs May resigns. This could mean a new PM or even a change of government

Sources: BBC, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

  
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# Uncertainty weighs on S'pore firms with UK ops

**Businesses fret over chance of a hard Brexit; analysts warn of volatile near-term outlook**

**Grace Leong**  
Business Correspondent

British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit plans may be in tatters, but Singapore-based Concorde Security is moving ahead with its expansion plans in the United Kingdom.

"Regardless of how Brexit turns out, they still need security solutions. Just like utilities," said Mr Chow Siew Chong, vice-president of the security solutions provider.

As one of several Singapore companies operating in the UK, Concorde Security may be sanguine about how and if the country will leave the European Union, but other local business groups still fret over the possibility of a hard Brexit.

The striking down of Mrs May's proposed Brexit deal by the UK Parliament has compounded the uncertainty over Britain's exit from the EU.

While the pound and stock markets across Asia mostly held their ground yesterday, supported by relief over a smaller chance of the worst-case scenario – a no-deal Brexit – the near-term outlook is likely to be choppy and volatile, said Bank of Singapore currency strategist Sim Moh Siong.

Analysts say there are only a few possible outcomes: Brexit will be delayed or completed by March 29, with or without an exit deal.

And, of course, there is a possibility of revoking Article 50 and staying in the EU.

Most agree that Tuesday's record defeat for Mrs May makes a delay, and possibly a new referendum, more likely. Parliament will also have more control over the Brexit process, reducing the risk that Britain will crash out of the EU.

"We believe if a soft Brexit scenario materialises, it would be positive for Asian stock markets as risk appetite will recover. On the currency front, (it) will lead to strengthening of the pound and Asian currencies against the greenback," said Credit Suisse investment strategist Suresh Tantia.

But CIMB Private Bank economist Song Seng Wun still sees a strong risk of a hard Brexit because "there is no compelling reason for the EU to renegotiate the deal, and it has the stronger hand."

"Even though the UK government is coming closer to the cliff, the passengers in the car are still squabbling. They haven't decided on applying the brakes or making a U-turn, or deploying the parachute."

Business groups also sounded the alarm on the dangers of leaving the

bloc without a deal. Singapore Business Federation chief executive Ho Meng Kit told The Straits Times: "The defeat vote, though largely expected, is fuelling uncertainty for Singapore businesses with operations in the UK. The date for Brexit is a little more than two months away, but there is still no clear picture on how exactly the UK will leave the EU."

"As it becomes harder to predict the future of the UK market and the rules it will play by, companies have to be prepared for the worst-case scenario – a no-deal Brexit. This scenario which will see the UK cut ties with the EU overnight without a planned transition could mean backlogs at British ports and Customs, among other issues," Mr Ho warned.

One silver lining is that the EU-Singapore free trade agreement (FTA) will not be affected, he said.

"While there is no Singapore-UK FTA at the moment, we look forward to the start of talks with the UK after Brexit is completed," he added.

The UK is Singapore's 20th largest global trading partner, with bilateral trade in goods valued at \$11.4 billion in 2017, according to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. A spokesman for the ministry said: "Singapore is confident that our bilateral ties with the UK will remain strong... Singapore hopes for the UK to stay plugged into the global economy and remain engaged in Asia."

The chaos over Brexit is not likely to affect Singapore-listed companies such as ComfortDelGro, which derives 23 per cent of its revenues from its bus, taxi and coach businesses in the UK, and Singapore Press Holdings (SPH), which has student dormitory assets there, said OCBC Investment Research analysts.

"SPH's portfolio of student accommodation in the UK contributed 2.5 per cent to first-quarter 2019 operating revenue. At this stage, we do not expect Brexit to have a significant financial impact on SPH," OCBC Investment analysts said.

For CDL Hospitality Trusts, demand for its hotel rooms in Cambridge and Manchester should stay stable, while for Ascott Residence Trust, corporate demand may be affected by the terms of the final Brexit deal, but leisure demand should benefit from a weaker pound, OCBC Investment analyst Deborah Ong said.

Business groups also sounded the alarm on the dangers of leaving the

BRUCE LEONG@sph.com.sg



An anti-Brexit demonstrator reacting to the result of the British Parliament's vote on the Brexit deal in London on Tuesday. Pro-Brexit activists were similarly buoyed by the defeat of Prime Minister Theresa May's deal, but for different reasons – they want a no-deal Brexit. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

## Pro-EU protesters revel in defeat of Brexit deal

**LONDON** • Waving European Union flags, hundreds of anti-Brexit activists outside Parliament roared with approval as the government's divorce deal was crushed by MPs.

Massed in front of two big screens airing live coverage of the pivotal vote, the crowd of fervent pro-Europeans erupted into cheers and applause as the result was relayed on Tuesday.

"I am so pleased – but a bit concerned with what comes next," retiree Sarah Cuthbertson, 68, told Agence France-Presse (AFP). "I didn't think it would be such a big majority against," she said of the 230-vote margin of defeat – the largest ever in modern British political history.

Nearby, a smaller contingent of pro-Brexit activists was similarly cheered by the defeat of Prime Minister Theresa May's deal, but

for different reasons.

"I am ecstatic," said Mr Reg Kerr-Bell, 55, a retiree in London clapping a "Leave Means Leave" placard. "No-deal is what I want to see now."

However, he conceded that Parliament's rejection of the government's plan puts Brexit in some jeopardy. "I am very worried they (MPs) might try to hijack the process."

Deploying flags, floats and even a mock-up of the Titanic dubbed "HMS Brexit", hundreds of noisy pro- and anti-EU activists had descended on Westminster to make their voices heard ahead of the crunch vote.

"The only thing so far that managed to unite the country has been this deal and how everyone hates it," Mr Simon Fisher, 25, told AFP, draped in a "Leave Means Leave" flag.

As opposition Labour leader

Jeremy Corbyn announced he had filed a no-confidence motion in the government, pro-EU supporters urged him to go further.

"Unless he changes his stance on a second referendum, I don't think he will get people on board," said Ms Lesley La cloche, 61, who was draped in EU attire.

Some waved signs and placards like "Don't Let May Betray the UK" and "Stop the Brexit Mess".

Crowds converged on the square and street opposite the Palace of Westminster – the formal name for the Houses of Parliament and grounds – from the early hours of the morning, under the gaze of TV cameras beaming the images around the world.

In one of the more eye-catching displays, pro-EU protesters reimagined the Titanic disaster, erecting a cardboard ship, iceberg and caricature of PM May on the bow beside a life-ring. "Brexit is a sinking ship," said Mr Bert Wender, one of the organisers.

Demonstrators had lined the walkways around nearby makeshift broadcasting studios, with each side staking out their camp and no mingling on show.

Despite the entrenched opposition, the atmosphere remained mainly civil as large numbers of police looked on.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

**TIME RUNNING OUT**  
I urge the United Kingdom to clarify its intentions as soon as possible. Time is almost up.

“

**EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER**

**BALL IN LONDON'S COURT**

**It is now up to the British government to say what the next stage is. The EU will remain united and determined to find a deal.**

“

**EU'S CHIEF BREXIT NEGOTIATOR MICHEL BARNIER**

**SAD SITUATION**

**This is a bitter day for Europe. We are well prepared – but a hard Brexit would be the least attractive choice, for the EU and GB (Great Britain).**

“

**GERMAN FINANCE MINISTER AND VICE-CHANCELLOR OLAF SCHOLZ**

**NO END TO TROUBLES**

**There are no more words to describe the frustration, impatience and growing anger among businesses after 2½ years on a high-stakes political roller-coaster ride that shows no sign of stopping.**

“

**BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ADAM MARSHALL**

## EU leaders dismayed, warn UK is running out of time

**BRUSSELS** • European Union leaders have expressed dismay and regret after the British Parliament rejected a Brexit divorce deal, saying they were stepping up emergency planning and warned that London was running out of time.

The EU's chief executive, the European Parliament Brexit negotiator and a host of prime ministers took to Twitter on Tuesday to call on London for ideas on what to do now to stop Britain crashing out of the bloc with no deal on March 29.

European Council President Donald Tusk, who chairs EU summits, suggested that the only real solution was for Britain to stay in the EU after British lawmakers defeated Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit divorce deal by a crushing majority of 432 to 202.

"If a deal is impossible, and no one wants no deal, then who will finally have the courage to say what the only positive solution is?" Mr Tusk tweeted after the vote.

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, who has overseen two years of tortuous negotiations between London and Brussels, and offered assurances to Mrs May on the eve of the vote, said that

for Britain, "time is almost up". He warned in a statement that the chances of Britain leaving the bloc without an agreement had increased, referring to a so-called disorderly withdrawal, and that the commission would continue its no-deal preparations.

EU leaders, who signed off on the Brexit deal last month, have repeatedly said it was the best solution possible because it provided a transition period for businesses to adapt. Despite only 10 weeks to go until Britain's scheduled departure, officials in Brussels ruled out the prospect of an extraordinary summit of the other 27 EU leaders any time soon.

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz tweeted: "I regret the outcome of the Brexit vote in the British Lower House in London. In any case, there will be no renegotiation of the withdrawal agreement."

French President Emmanuel Macron said Britain would be the biggest loser if it crashed out of the EU without a deal. He indicated late on Tuesday that there was a small chance of very minor tweaks being made to the agreement. "Maybe we will make improvements on one or



A man in London with a painting yesterday depicting British Prime Minister Theresa May after Parliament rejected her Brexit deal. PHOTO: REUTERS

two things, but I don't really think so because we have reached the maximum of what we could do with the deal," he said.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel told legislators she could not envisage renegotiating Britain's

EU withdrawal agreement, but she did not rule out further clarifying Britain's future ties to the bloc, two meeting participants told Reuters.

EU leaders have insisted there could be no renegotiation. But as the parliamentary defeat

fed uncertainty in European capitals, several leaders called on Britain to come up with alternatives to the rejected withdrawal agreement.

The EU Parliament's Brexit negotiator Guy Verhofstadt said British lawmakers now needed to say what kind of deal they wanted.

"The UK Parliament has said what it doesn't want," Mr Verhofstadt, a former Belgian premier, said on Twitter. "Now, it is time to find out what UK parliamentarians want."

France's Europe Minister Nathalie Loiseau said yesterday that the EU could extend the deadline for Brexit beyond March 29 if Britain requested it.

Meanwhile, spokesman for Dr Merkel said the German government will tackle the issue of whether to extend the Brexit deadline only after it knows how Britain intends to proceed.

"First, we need to know where the British see things going, so this is a hypothetical question," said government spokesman Ulrike Demmer, when asked about a possible extension.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, BLOOMBERG



Pro-Brexit demonstrators near the Houses of Parliament in London on Tuesday. Members of the British expat community in Singapore expressed concern over the uncertain path ahead for their country after British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal was shot down in Parliament. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

## May left crushed, humiliated: British media

LONDON • British Prime Minister Theresa May was left "crushed" and "humiliated", Britain's newspapers said yesterday as they raked over the fallout from Parliament's huge rejection of her European Union divorce deal.

Daily papers said Mrs May's deal was sunk after the huge vote against the agreement struck between Mrs May's government and Brussels, as she prepared to fight a no-confidence motion yesterday.

The Daily Telegraph's front page read "A complete humiliation", after MPs voted 432 to 202 to reject the deal. Its editorial said Mrs May had misjudged Parliament and the EU had failed to understand the "essential issues of sovereignty and freedom" behind the Brexit vote.

"The government must regain the confidence of the House, rethink the agreement and go to the Europeans with a united front. Whether or not Mrs May leads that effort is a decision upon which she will now have to think very hard."

The Sun tabloid's front page read "Brexitinct". "May's Brexit deal dead as a dodo," said Britain's biggest-selling paper, with a mock-up picture of the Prime Minister as the extinct flightless bird.

The Times columnist Matthew Parris said it was time for senior MPs to take over the Brexit process, adding: "There exists no leadership in either the government or the opposition capable of taking us through this mess."

The Daily Mirror tabloid said on its front page: "No deal, no hope, no clue, no confidence." It called Mrs May "the humiliated PM".

The Daily Mail's headline read "Fighting for her life". The tabloid said the defeat left Mrs May's power "hanging by a thread", calling it a "devastating result, which threatens to plunge the Brexit process into chaos".

The Financial Times broadsheet ran the headline "May's defeat spells trouble for the EU's Brexit approach", and said: "Huge loss leaves PM in race against time."

The Daily Express' front-page headline read "Dismay". "Now, it is time for MPs to do their duty and work with Theresa May for a deal that satisfies the 17.4m who voted for Brexit... Don't fail us!" it said.

The Scotsman's front-page headline simply said: "Crushed."

The Guardian said on its front page: "May suffers historic defeat as Tories turn against her."

There were similarly grim assessments across the Atlantic, with US newspapers saying Britain is headed for disaster after the vote.

New York Times columnist Roger Cohen even suggested another referendum on leaving the EU. "A democracy that cannot change its mind is not a democracy," he wrote. "The people may do that when presented with the whole picture after seeing only a partial or distorted one."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Unclear path worries British expats in S'pore

Cheryl Teh and Vanessa Liu

They live far from their home country, but members of the British expat community in Singapore are following the Brexit story with concern.

This worry only deepened yesterday after British Prime Minister Theresa May's plan for the country to exit the European Union was shot down in Parliament. This leaves the path ahead unclear, several of them told The Straits Times.

"I find it all very embarrassing... I hope it (Brexit) doesn't go ahead as my opinion is that it feels like a step backwards," said Mr James Hughes, 32, an operations lead in an advertising and technology company.

"I think there is a massive lack of trust and faith in our current government, and I am interested to see where they will go from here and if they can in fact restore confidence in the country."

Mr Andrew Thomas, 55, regional chief executive of Eagle's Flight, a multinational training and development company, mused on what might have been.

"Having lived outside of the UK for

years, I am very much a spectator. But I am left wondering, given what people know about the EU and the consequences for Brexit now, whether they would vote the same way," he said. "If there was a second referendum today, people would be much more informed about what they are voting for."

He mentioned that a Brexit on Mrs May's current terms would restrict freedom of movement. "The British passport used to give me access to 16, 20 markets that I could work in or live in every year – and made me part of, as a citizen of the EU, a community of 300 million people. With Brexit – it doesn't."

Executives working in UK-based banking and finance firms are feeling anxious, too. "I think that leaving the EU will not make much sense for the British economy, especially on these terms," said Mr Benjamin Farleigh, a banker in his late 20s who has lived in Singapore for two years.

"It will also cause massive ripples across the market, and I don't see any scenario where leaving the EU turns out well for the UK."

tienli@sph.com.sg  
liuxyv@sph.com.sg



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# New council aims to get more women on boards

**It will have expanded scope to look at boards of organisations in public and people sectors**

**Sue-Ann Tan**

In the last four years, the proportion of women on the boards of Singapore's top 100 listed companies doubled to 15 per cent.

While a "good achievement", it is hardly enough, President Halimah Yacob said at the Istana yesterday, as she announced the formation of a new council to get more women on the boards of organisations.

Madam Halimah will be the patron of the Council for Board Diversity, which will be co-chaired by Mr Loh Boon Chye, chief executive officer of the Singapore Exchange (SGX), and Mrs Mildred Tan, chairman of the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC).

The council consisting of 20 members – nine men and 11 women – used to be known as the Diversity Action Committee (DAC), which was formed in 2014 and focused on SGX-listed companies.

It will have an expanded scope to look into female representation on the boards of organisations in the public sector and people sector, which includes non-governmental organisations, voluntary welfare organisations and charities.

As of last month, the representation of women on boards in the top 100 primary-listed SGX companies had increased to 15.2 per cent from 7.5 per cent before the DAC started.

Madam Halimah, who was an adviser to the DAC, said: "This is a good achievement. But, of course, we all

acknowledge it is still a challenge for us to reach the first-tier target of 20 per cent by the end of next year, and further effort is necessary.

"It is a natural progression for statutory boards and charities to be included so that organisations in the people and public sectors can also harness the benefits of leadership with diversity of thought."

In 2017, the DAC set targets of increasing female participation on boards of listed companies to 20 per cent by 2020, 25 per cent by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030.

Madam Halimah added: "The diversity allows organisations to have access to fresh perspectives for better decision making and risk management. This has been shown to lead to more robust corporate governance and improved stewardship of organisations."

"With an increased demand for qualified executives fairly early on in our economic development, Singapore has had a reasonably high proportion of women executives for some time now. Many women in Singapore already contribute at senior leadership positions in their organisations. But not many serve on boards, and this has to change."

The new council will focus on raising awareness of the importance of board diversity, developing the pipeline of board-ready women, and working with the Government on policies and programmes.

Among 16 countries studied in a DAC report, Singapore ranked 11th in terms of the representation of



President Halimah Yacob meeting members of the Council for Board Diversity at the Istana yesterday. Madam Halimah is patron of the council, which is co-chaired by National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre chairman Mildred Tan (second from right) and Singapore Exchange CEO Loh Boon Chye. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

11th

Singapore's ranking in terms of the representation of women on boards, lagging behind countries such as Britain and Malaysia, among 16 countries studied in a DAC report.

women on boards, below countries such as Britain and Malaysia.

Madam Halimah encouraged organisations, especially those that have not had female directors, to seriously consider whether they have valid reasons for resisting diversity and its benefits.

"Those that turn thought into action sooner rather than later, by casting the net wide to look for the best and most diverse talents and experience to serve on their boards, will position their organisations well, as forward-looking and responsible stewards for sustainable development in the long

run," she said.

Representatives in the people and public sectors said the move to have more women on organisations' boards is a good one.

According to the new council, the representation of women on boards in statutory boards is 23 per cent.

The figure is 31 per cent when it comes to Institutions of a Public Character, taking into account around 600 organisations.

Mr Gerard Ee, chairman of the Charity Council, said: "This message reminds people to have diversity, although it is not about numbers, but what the individual can bring to the organisation."

Mrs Tan of NVPC added: "The numbers for the people sector are quite good, but it is not even across organisations."

"The mindset also has to shift from wanting to meet numbers to actual quality. It is not about tokenism, but about the good that women can bring to the table."

suetan@sph.com.sg

## How firms fare

The companies with the most female participation on their boards, according to the Diversity Action Committee report on SGX-listed companies:

- Singapore Post: 44 per cent as at end-2018
- Parkway Life Reit: 38 per cent
- Singapore Telecommunications: 36 per cent
- Mapletree Commercial Trust, Hutchison Port Holdings Trust, Singapore Press Holdings, Best World International, Keppel Reit, OUE Commercial Real Estate Investment Trust: 33 per cent

Companies with no women on their boards as of end-2018: AIMS AMP Capital Industrial Reit, CapitaLand Mall Trust,

Citic Envirotech, ESR-Reit, Frasers Centrepoint Trust, Frasers Commercial Trust, Frasers Hospitality Trust, Frasers Logistics & Industrial Trust, Golden Agri-Resources, Haw Par Corporation, Hong Leong Finance, Hotel Properties, OUE Hospitality Trust, OUE, Oxley Holdings, Perennial Real Estate Holdings, Riverstone Holdings, Starhill Global Real Estate Investment Trust, United Engineers, United Industrial Corporation, UOB Kay Hian Holdings, UOL Group, Wilmar International, Yangtze River Shipbuilding (Holdings).

Singapore Airlines announced the appointment of a female director with effect from Jan 1 this year.

**Sue-Ann Tan**

## Mystery over missing historic hockey medal at SRC

**Shamir Osman**

One of the treasured medals that marks a landmark victory in the Republic's sporting history has allegedly gone missing while on display at one of the nation's most esteemed sporting clubs.

Former Singapore hockey international Farleigh Clarke claims that his 1973 SEAP Games gold medal –

the only time the Republic beat powerhouse Malaysia to clinch the title – and a prized jersey had been on display at the Singapore Recreation Club's (SRC) Padang premises, but he has been unable to locate both items, nor retrieve them from the club, despite his efforts in the past year.

The medal had been on display since 2003.

"There were some renovation

works done at the club, and one of our members noticed early last year that the medal was no more on display after those works were completed," the 67-year-old former forward told The Straits Times.

"I have tried to ask club officials and even wrote in officially last year (in mid-December) asking for them to return the medal, but the club has not responded at all."

Mr Clarke is also seeking the return

of a jersey from a hockey team that featured Eurasian luminaries from Singapore's past. The Harlequins jersey belonged to Mr Clarke's father Andrew, who played alongside the likes of former law minister E.W. Barker and Percy Pennefather, the hockey captain who took Singapore to the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

ST first approached SRC about the missing medal and jersey in April last year, with the club saying



Former hockey player Farleigh Clarke said he has been unable to get his 1973 SEAP Games gold medal back.

that it would reply to queries after its annual general meeting on April 28. However, despite follow-up e-mails, calls and text messages, the club has yet to respond, some nine months on.

shamiro@sph.com.sg

## Lorry driver, cyclist in Pasir Ris altercation charged

**Selina Lum**  
Law Correspondent

A lorry driver and cyclist involved in an altercation in Pasir Ris – captured in two videos that went viral – were charged in court yesterday.

The lorry driver, Teo Seng Tiong, 57, faces two charges.

He is accused of causing hurt to cyclist Eric Cheung Hoyu, 35, by negligently failing to keep a proper lookout while overtaking him.

Teo's actions resulted in him encroaching into the path of a taxi on his right, thus causing him to swerve left and collide into Cheung, court documents stated.

The maximum punishment is a jail term of six months and a \$2,500 fine.

The driver also faces a second charge of failing to make a police report within 24 hours of the accident, which occurred at about 11.55am on Dec 22 last year along



Lorry driver Teo Seng Tiong (left) is accused of causing hurt to cyclist Eric Cheung Hoyu (right), who also faces charges. ST PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI

Pasir Ris Drive 3.

The offence carries a fine of up to \$1,000 or a jail term of up to three months for a first offender.

Cheung, a British national, also faces two charges.

He is accused of committing mischief by knocking off the side mirror of Teo's lorry with his hand,

causing \$15 in damage.

The maximum punishment is a year in jail and a fine.

Cheung is also charged with breaching traffic rules by riding his bicycle in the middle of the left-most lane, instead of keeping to the far-left edge of the road, thereby causing obstruction to

faster-moving vehicles.

A first offender faces a fine of up to \$1,000 or a jail term of up to three months.

Teo's lawyer, Mr Chia Boon Teck, told the magistrate's court that his client was prepared to plead guilty in a week, adding that he will be asking the prosecution to

consider taking one of the two charges into consideration.

The case was fixed for Teo to plead guilty on Jan 30.

Cheung's lawyer asked for the case to be adjourned so that he can discuss the case with his client and take instructions. The court also approved Cheung's request to leave

Singapore to attend a planned family reunion in Hong Kong between Jan 17 and Jan 22. Additional bail of \$10,000 was imposed. His case will be mentioned again on Jan 30.

Teo and Cheung did not have any interactions in court.

selinal@sph.com.sg





## Govt will act against anyone who threatens society: Shanmugam

Hariz Baharudin

The issuing of a Restriction Order under the Internal Security Act (ISA) against a formerly accredited religious teacher shows the Government's readiness to act against anyone who threatens society, said Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam.

He added that all Singaporeans can promote their religion as long as it does not promote violence or put down other races or faiths.

"We have been very strict about it; we have said across all religions, promote your religion, but you cannot promote violence, you cannot run down another religion, you cannot run down another race," he said.

"The vast majority of our people as well as religious leaders understand that, which is why Singapore is the oasis of racial and religious harmony that it is when compared with many parts of the world."

Mr Shanmugam was speaking to reporters yesterday after his min-

istry issued a statement that a former religious teacher and his student who held radical beliefs that promote violence and views detrimental to Singapore's cohesion have each been issued a Restriction Order (RO) under the ISA.

The Home Affairs Ministry said Murad Mohd Said, 46, a freelance religious teacher who was issued an RO on Dec 5 last year, was struck off the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) last May for his segregationist ideologies that contravened the ARS Code of Ethics.

The ministry said Murad taught that it was compulsory to kill apostates, whom he defined broadly as non-believers of Islam, people who renounced the religion as well as Sufis and Shi'ites, both of whom are minority groups in the community.

He also taught his students that Muslims were allowed to defend themselves by waging "armed jihad" against "infidels who persecuted them", and encouraged his students to withdraw from Singapore's secular society, disregard

secular laws and adhere to syariah law, the ministry added.

Murad's student, 56-year-old technician Razali Abas, was arrested last September and placed on an RO in October to "prevent him from continuing his downward spiral into extremism". He held radical views on using armed violence against the perceived enemies of Islam, the ministry said.

Asked why Murad was not placed on an RO or a Detention Order when he was struck off the ARS last May, Mr Shanmugam said the Internal Security Department makes a "careful assessment of people" before taking action.

Often, he said, officers would try to engage those who might be veering off the accepted path and advise them about the law.

"Only if all of that doesn't work and you continue - as in his case - to advocate violence and killing of others... then we will act," he said.

The minister commended the agencies for striking Murad off the ARS when they found out that his teachings were "not appropriate".

The ministry also said in an update that the RO issued against Singaporean Jauhari Abdullah was allowed to lapse on Sept 14 last year.

He was a senior member of terror cell Jemaah Islamiyah and was detained in September 2002 and released in September 2012, before being placed on an RO.

harizbah@sph.com.sg

## Don't let actions of a few tar community's good name: Ministers

had been engaged by Muis and the ARB for his divisive views, but did not change them.

He was then struck off the ARS register and barred from conducting classes here. But he continued spreading his views online.

As the authorities investigated Razali, they discovered Murad's teachings had influenced him. It was then that they deemed Murad's case to be serious enough for him to be placed on an RO.

Mr Masagos said: "Murad's violent and problematic views as a religious teacher, or asatizah, carried weight among his followers and had the potential to mislead many more, with grave consequences for our religious harmony."

Muis said the cases of Murad and Razali reinforce the need to remain vigilant against exclusivist and extremist teachings and the importance of the mandatory ARS to ensure Muslims receive religious guidance only from certified religious teachers.

Ustaz Pasuni Maulan, ARB vice-chairman, said the board would not hesitate to remove from the scheme any teachers who violate its code of ethics. "Such individuals would not be allowed to mislead the community, as these teachings are clearly incompatible with the values of the Muslim community, who are well-adjusted to Singapore's multi-cultural and multi-religious society."

Hariz Baharudin

## China building lethal force: US report

### It says Beijing is on verge of fielding some of world's most advanced weapons

WASHINGTON • China is likely developing a long-range bomber capable of delivering nuclear weapons and a space-based early warning system it could use to more quickly respond to an attack, according to a new report from the United States Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA).

The development of the bomber, when combined with China's land-based nuclear weapons programme and a deployed submarine with intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) technology, would give Beijing a "triad" of nuclear delivery systems similar to the US and Russia, according to the report published on Tuesday.

"China is building a robust, lethal force with capabilities spanning the air, maritime, space and information domains which will enable China to impose its will in the region," the report's author, Lieutenant General Robert Ashley, said in the introduction.

The report comes as President Donald Trump's administration focuses on the potential for "great power" conflict with countries like China and Russia as part of its national defence strategy.

It also comes amid heightened trade tensions between Washington and Beijing, and continuing disputes about China's posture in the South China Sea.

Speaking in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said yesterday that some of the report's assertions are "extremely unprofessional" and "absurd", without specifying which aspects of the report she was referring to.

"The report disregards facts and is full of a Cold War and zero-sum mentality. The report speculates on China's path, strategic intention and defence building," Ms Hua said. "We hope the US military can view China's growing military rationally and objectively, and maintain the



Chinese military vehicles carrying DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missiles at a 2015 military parade in Beijing. The US Defence Intelligence Agency's report comes amid heightened trade tensions between Washington and Beijing, and continuing disputes about China's posture in the South China Sea. China said that some of the report's assertions are "extremely unprofessional" and "absurd". PHOTO: REUTERS

overall situation of military and bilateral relations."

According to the DIA report, Beijing's development of a nuclear-capable bomber would provide China with "its first credible nuclear triad of delivery systems dispersed across land, sea and air - a posture considered since the Cold War to improve survivability and strategic deterrence".

Even without the bomber, China is progressing on its new Jin-class nuclear submarines which, armed with JL-2 ICBMs, are "poised to con-

tribute to China's nuclear deterrent once they begin strategic patrols in the near future", DIA said.

The DIA's observations will likely be used by proponents of the Pentagon's drive to modernise the US' ageing nuclear weapons infrastructure over the next decades, an effort which could total about US\$1 trillion (\$1.36 trillion).

Despite a slew of disputes over Taiwan, the South China Sea and global trade, the review says there is no indication in Chinese military strategic documents that Beijing

views war with the US as looming.

Moreover, while China's defence spending climbed an average of 10 per cent per year from 2000 to 2016, total spending remains significantly below that of the US, the report said. Spending was about 1.3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) from 2014 to last year, compared with over 3 per cent of GDP for the US over the same period.

The report also said China has acquired technology "by any means available" in its long-running effort to modernise its armed forces,

an effort the DIA said has put the Chinese military "on the verge of fielding some of the most modern weapon systems in the world".

China is also developing additional capabilities that can attack and jam satellites after testing an anti-satellite missile system in 2014, according to the DIA.

"Space operations probably will form an integral component of other PLA campaigns," it added, using an acronym for the People's Liberation Army.

BLOOMBERG, WASHINGTON POST

Despite a slew of disputes over Taiwan, the South China Sea and global trade, the review says there is no indication in Chinese military strategic documents that Beijing views war with the US as looming.



Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen waving from the deck of the Ming Chuan frigate during a ceremony to commission two guided missile frigates from the US for the Taiwan navy last November. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## US wary of risk to Taiwan as China's military might grows

WASHINGTON • The United States is closely watching Chinese intentions towards Taiwan, concerned that Beijing's growing military prowess may increase the risk that it could one day consider bringing the self-ruled island under its control by force, a US official said.

The senior US defence intelligence official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, did not predict that China's military, known as the People's Liberation Army (PLA), would take such a step, but said such a possibility was the top worry

as China expands and modernises its military capabilities.

"The biggest concern is that... they are getting to a point where the PLA leadership may actually tell (President) Xi Jinping that they are confident in their capabilities," the official said on Tuesday.

The official, asked if the reference was to Chinese confidence in their capabilities to be able to successfully win a battle with Taiwan, said: "Well, specifically, that would be the most concerning to me."

Taiwan is only one of a growing

number of flashpoints in the US-China relationship, including a trade war, US sanctions on the Chinese military and China's increasingly muscular military posture in the South China Sea.

However, in meetings with Pentagon leaders, PLA officials have long described Taiwan as China's most sensitive issue.

China has repeatedly sent military aircraft and ships to circle the island on drills in the past few years and worked to isolate the island internationally, whittling down its few remaining diplomatic allies.

It has also strongly objected to the passage of US warships through the Taiwan Strait this year, and issued a terse warning about Taiwan after talks in Beijing on Tuesday with the US Navy's top officer, Admiral John Richardson.

In the talks, General Li Zuocheng, who is chief of China's Central Military Commission Joint

Staff Department, stressed that Taiwan was "China's internal affairs", and that Beijing would allow "no external interference".

Washington has no formal ties with Taipei but is bound by law to help the island defend itself, and is Taiwan's main source of arms. The Pentagon says Washington has sold Taiwan more than US\$15 billion (\$20 billion) in arms since 2010.

Mr Xi has stepped up pressure on the democratic island since Ms Tsai Ing-wen from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party became president in 2016.

On Jan 2, Mr Xi said in a speech that China deserved the right to use force to bring Taiwan under its control, but would strive to achieve peaceful reunification.

Still, the US defence intelligence official cautioned against over-reacting, noting that Mr Xi could believe he has plenty of time to achieve reunification with Taiwan. REUTERS



Above: Pink Men Vs Pink Buddha by Manit Sriwanichpoom at last year's Art Stage.

Left: Japanese artist Miwa Komatsu's live painting performance at last year's edition of Art Stage Singapore. ST FILE PHOTOS

# Art Stage fair cancelled days before opening

## Exhibitors scramble for alternative venues; organiser cites poor sales, new competition

Akshita Nanda and Toh Wen Li

Organisers of Art Stage Singapore have cancelled the contemporary art fair just nine days before its planned opening, citing poor local sales and "unfair competition" from a new fair at Gillman Barracks.

The short notice has shocked several exhibitors and left them scrambling for alternative venues.

Art Stage Singapore, which started in 2011 with backing from various government agencies and is regarded as Singapore's main art fair, was to run this year from Jan 25 to 27. It had 45 exhibitors, including 15 from Singapore. The fair was to happen during Singapore Art Week, an annual public arts festival organised by the National Arts Council (NAC), the Economic Development Board (EDB) and the Singapore Tourism Board (STB).

Gallery representatives said they received an e-mail yesterday from Art Stage's founder and president Lorenzo Rudolf asking them to "cease all preparations for Art Stage Singapore 2019" or to reverse them.

Later, Mr Rudolf sent out a press statement and an almost-identical open letter to collectors. Both cited "the very difficult market situation in Singapore as well as... an unequal competition situation on site" as reasons for the cancellation at short notice.

He went on to say that of the 500 galleries invited to Art Stage Singapore over the past eight years, over 450 had refused to return because of poor local sales.

In the open letter, he referred to "a new obstacle, a new art fair to be held concurrently at Gillman Barracks". This is likely to be the upcoming S.E.A. Focus, a boutique art fair which is an initiative of STPI - Creative Workshop & Gallery. It was announced last July and will run from Jan 24 to 27.

Mr Rudolf said that Art Stage Singapore has "no chance to (financially) compete and survive this unequal competition and cannibalism".

A joint statement from NAC, EDB and STB said: "We are disappointed

that Art Stage Singapore has cancelled the 2019 edition of its fair. It is unfortunate that exhibitors, partners and collectors who had planned to take part in the fair will be impacted by this development. We understand that the cancellation is a commercial decision."

The agencies added that they learnt of the confirmed decision earlier yesterday, and that at a press conference on Nov 30 last year, fair organisers "did not allude to any issues or potential of cancellation".

A spokesman for Marina Bay Sands (MBS) confirmed that Art Stage Singapore had cancelled its show at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre. The spokesman added that tickets bought through Marina Bay Sands' system would be refunded to affected customers.

### MONEY WASTED

How can we justify this to our artists? We spent money upfront to create the artworks, we invested a lot of money shipping from Europe and New York. This hurts the image of Singapore.

“

**MS LYDIE BLANDEAU**, chairman of Paris- and Singapore-based gallery Visionairs.

### REPUTATION AT STAKE

We are more concerned that it is embarrassing for Singapore. I have friends in overseas galleries who have already shipped over their works, and booked flights and hotels. It is also the reputation of Singapore as an arts hub that is at stake.

“

**MR GUILLAUME LEVY-LAMBERT**, Art Porters Gallery co-founder.

Gallerists like Ms Lydie Blandeau were fuming. The chairman of Paris- and Singapore-based gallery Visionairs said it was the first time in her 10 years participating in art fairs that a cancellation notice had been sent the week before, and without an explanation. "How can we justify this to our artists? We spent money upfront to create the artworks, we invested a lot of money shipping from Europe and New York," she said.

One of the works she planned to show was a watch that cost \$100,000 to make. "This hurts the image of Singapore," she added.

Art Stage Singapore started here as a flagship art fair for South-east Asia, helmed by Swiss national Rudolf, who used to be director of Art Basel in the mid-1990s. It had the backing of the EDB, STB, National Heritage Board and NAC.

The first fair featured works by master artists such as China's Ai Weiwei and notched million-dollar sales. However, footfall and sales fell in recent years. Last year, there were only 84 exhibitors, compared with 131 in 2017 and 170 in 2016.

The fair has other regional competition from new Taiwan-based art fair Taipei Dangdai from Jan 18 to 20 and Art Basel Hong Kong in March.

Marc Straus Gallery's director, Singaporean Ken Tan, who spoke to The Straits Times from New York, said his gallery invested a "five-figure" sum in the fair this year, including paying for the booth at MBS (prices range from \$11,750 to \$67,500 on the fair's application form), shipping out artworks and paying for artists to be in Singapore.

Art Porters' Gallery co-founder Guillaume Levy-Lambert said it had planned a solo showcase of seven paintings by Indonesian artist Naufal Abshar, which were specially created for Art Stage Singapore and arrived here on Tuesday. The works will be presented at his Spottiswoode Park Road gallery instead.

"We are more concerned that it is embarrassing for Singapore. I have friends in overseas galleries who have already shipped over their works, and booked flights and hotels," he said. "It is also the reputation of Singapore as an arts hub that is at stake."

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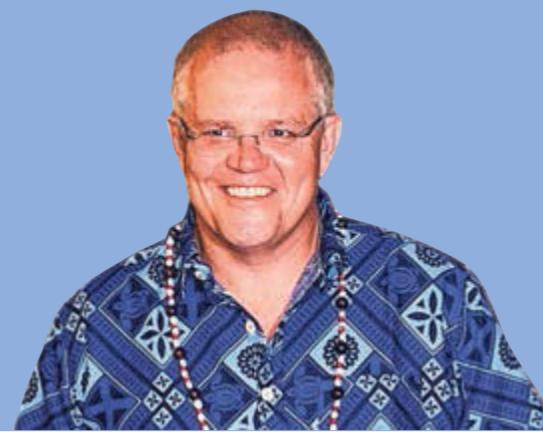
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## Strained Seoul ties with Tokyo worsening

Experts warn of escalation of retaliation if Japan-bashing by South Korea continues

**Chang May Choon**  
South Korea Correspondent  
In Seoul

Animosity between South Korea and Japan looks set to worsen in the lead-up to the 100th anniversary of Korea's 1919 independence movement against Japanese rule on March 1, as diplomatic spats over issues like comfort women and forced wartime labour have deepened in recent months.

The two neighbours are also embroiled in a radar dispute that they have so far failed to resolve.

Tokyo last month accused a South Korean warship of locking a targeting radar on a Japanese patrol plane in the waters between them, but Seoul insisted the ship was only trying to assist a North Korean fishing boat found there.

In the latest development yesterday, South Korea's Defence Ministry said its Japanese counterpart refused to reveal the frequency of the radar detected by Japan's plane, when asked.

Instead, Japan's defence ministry asked for "complete frequency information" of the radar, which South Korea said is confidential military information.

Experts say bilateral ties between the two neighbours – first normalised in a 1965 treaty – are plumbing new depths, with no signs that they will get better.

"Friendly relations are becoming more and more of a thing of the past," Yonsei University's Professor Lee Jung-hoon told The Straits Times. "I don't see how these (bilateral) issues can be resolved in the immediate future. One side will have to relent and concede, but I don't see that happening."

The growing divide can be attributed to power changes in the two countries, noted Dr Lee Myong-chun, a fellow at the Northeast Asian History Foundation.

When the 1965 treaty was first signed, South Korea was still recovering from the 1950-1953 Korean War and "technocrats and industrialists that placed modernisation as the top priority were the leaders at the time", he wrote in a commentary.

"Today's ruling power in Seoul are the forces behind a democratisation movement revolting against the military regime that compromised with Japan," and it seems inevitable for the govern-

ment under liberal President Moon Jae-in, a former human rights lawyer, to clash with the administration of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a nationalistic conservative.

With South Korea's economy growing from one-tenth the size of Japan's in the 1960s to the fourth-largest in Asia now, just two notches behind Japan, "(South) Korea can speak more assertively... as it no longer needs to feel inferior to Japan on economic grounds", added Dr Lee.

Just last week, Mr Abe said it was "extremely regrettable" that South Korean victims of forced labour successfully sued for damages against Japanese companies Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries for exploitation during Japan's colonial rule (1910-1945).

Four days later, Mr Moon admonished Japan for trying to politicise the issue and turning it into a controversy. He urged Japan to "show more modesty" towards wartime crimes and said both sides should "combine their wisdom" to heal the pain of South Korean victims.

If Japan-bashing continues, experts warn of escalation of retaliation that can affect trade and tourism. It does not help that many activities are planned to mark the March 1 anniversary of Korea's independence movement against Japan, a day that can rouse anti-Japanese sentiments in South Korea.

Yonsei's Prof Lee pointed out that Japan can impose tariffs on South Korean exports to Japan, withdraw investments in South Korea, or make it harder for South Korean tourists to visit Japan. "These could be reciprocated by the South Korean government, and further escalation could happen," he warned.

East Asia expert Lim Tai Wei of the Singapore University of Social Sciences, however, is more optimistic, saying that both South Korea and Japan are mature and responsible states that can practise self-restraint.

"Any worst-case scenario will be brought back to realist realities when the two realise that they need their combined heft to deal with much larger powers like Russia, India and China, as well as Pacific powers like their closest ally, the United States," he told ST.

changmc@sph.com.sg

### Thorny issues



1

#### COMFORT WOMEN

The long dispute between Japan and South Korea over wartime sex slaves, or comfort women, was supposed to have been settled in a bilateral agreement signed in 2015, with Japan issuing an apology and setting up a fund for victims. But the new government of South Korea that took power in 2017 opposed the pact and scrapped the fund last November, a move experts say is tantamount to nullifying the agreement. Japan has lodged a formal protest, calling the decision "unacceptable".



2

#### FORCED LABOUR

South Korea's Supreme Court ordered a Japanese steelmaker last October to compensate four Koreans 100 million won (S\$121,000) each for forced labour during Japan's colonial era. The ruling drew a protest from Japan, which believes that all historical issues were settled when both countries signed a treaty in 1965. The court last week approved a petition to seize the Korean assets of Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal, prompting Japan on Monday to demand talks with South Korea.



3

#### RADARSAT

Japan accused a South Korean warship of locking its targeting radar on a Japanese maritime patrol plane in the waters between them on Dec 20, but South Korea insisted that the ship was only using its search radar to rescue a North Korean fishing boat that had drifted there. Both sides met for talks in Singapore on Monday but failed to narrow their differences.



4

#### DOKDO/TAKESHIMA ISLANDS ROW

Located in the waters between Japan and South Korea are two islands that both sides claim. The Koreans call them Dokdo, the Japanese call them Takeshima. South Korea said Japan recognised Dokdo as Korean territory in 1996 but annexed them in 1905 ahead of its colonial rule from 1910 to 1945. South Korea asserted that the islands were returned to them in 1945 but Japan disagreed.



5

#### MARCH 1 INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT AGAINST JAPAN

South Korea said on Monday it would roll out projects to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the March 1 independence movement in 1919 against Japanese colonial rule and the founding of its provisional government. They include efforts to recover the remains of indepen-

dence fighter Ahn Jung-geun, who shot dead Japanese leader Ito Hirobumi in 1909, and holding a centennial event on April 11 for about 6,000 people. These are bound to stir anti-Japanese sentiments in the country.

Chang May Choon

PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, EPA-EFE

## Smog-hit Bangkok grapples with shortage of N95 masks

**BANGKOK** • After spending several days choking on high levels of fine particle dust, many Bangkok residents have opted for masks to protect themselves.

But some have been unable to find the N95-grade face masks and are calling on the authorities to cover the shortage.

Meanwhile, a poll conducted by The Standard online magazine among 2,200 residents on Monday and Tuesday revealed that 50.3 per cent wore masks to protect themselves, while the rest complained they could not find one.

They said they had visited many pharmacies and convenience stores, but were told they would get one only in two weeks' time if they

made a reservation or ordered the product by post.

Another poll by the magazine on Twitter found that 53 per cent of the 715 respondents wore a face mask.

Most people responded to the question – "How do you live with PM2.5 (dust particles 2.5 micrometres or smaller in size)?" – by criticising the government for being slow in dealing with the issue and not having any remedial measures in place. Many also complained of respiratory problems.

On Tuesday morning, several people in Lat Phrao Road were seen wearing masks to protect themselves. They, too, complained about the shortage of N95 masks and called on the government to help

ease the shortage.

Similarly, people wearing masks were spotted in Sathorn and Silom roads, while pharmacies in the Victory Monument area confirmed a severe shortage of N95 masks.

Meanwhile, joggers in Chatuchak's Wachirabenchatat Park were also seen wearing masks, in line with official advice that people should protect themselves while outdoors because PM2.5 levels in many areas were beyond the safe limit of 50 micrograms per cubic m of air.

A man identified only as Mr Krit said he has been wearing an N95 mask during his daily run and is closely following air quality updates and warnings.

Some runners said they had halved their jogging period from the usual two hours, as running more than an hour could lead to breathing difficulties. They said they would exercise at home if the situation does not improve, while many complained of respiratory irritation and breathing difficulties.

Meanwhile, a report has warned that the air pollution will have a severe impact on the country's economy unless the authorities effectively clear the smog.

A Kasikorn Research Centre analysis on Tuesday said Thailand's healthcare and tourism sectors could face losses of 6.6 billion baht (S\$280 million).

THE NATION/ASIA NEWS NETWORK



People wearing face masks in Bangkok on Tuesday as the air quality in the Thai capital soared to unhealthy levels. PHOTO: EPA-EFE



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# S'pore-Malaysia relations still good despite disputes, says KL Foreign Minister

**Important that talks on sea and air disputes ongoing, moving in right direction, he adds**

**PUTRAJAYA** • Ties between Malaysia and Singapore are still "good", Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah said yesterday, despite ongoing air and maritime disputes between the two countries.

"Our relations with Singapore remain good. There are some issues but we are talking to each other, and that is very important," said Datuk Saifuddin, according to a report by national news agency

Bernama. "Most importantly, the discussions are going on. I am confident the discussions are moving in the right direction," he added.

He said five senior government officials will meet their Singaporean counterparts to discuss these issues.

Besides Mr Saifuddin, the others are Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Economic Affairs Minister Azmin Ali, Attorney-General

Tommy Thomas, and Foreign Ministry secretary-general Muhammad Shahrukl Idris Yaakob.

Singapore and Malaysia are locked in two separate disputes over territorial waters off Tuas, and airspace management over southern Johor.

The disagreements are the latest in a string of bilateral hiccups since Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad returned to power as Malaysia's Prime Minister after an unprecedented change of government in May last year.

The dispute over maritime boundaries started after Kuala Lumpur, on

Oct 25 last year, unilaterally extended the Johor Baru port limits into Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas.

Daily intrusions into these waters by Malaysian government vessels since November last year have continued despite the Malaysian Foreign Affairs Ministry declaring that it would take "all effective measures" to de-escalate the situation on the ground.

Malaysia has also objected to the implementation of new landing procedures for Singapore's Seletar Airport. Last week, Singapore and Malaysia took steps to defuse their

air and maritime tensions, with Mr Saifuddin and his Singaporean counterpart Vivian Balakrishnan reiterating their commitment "to preserving the vital relationship between both countries and improving bilateral ties on the basis of equality and mutual respect".

A day later, however, Johor Menteri Besar Osman Sapian boarded a vessel in the disputed waters off Tuas, an act that resulted in the postponement of the Joint Ministerial Committee for Iskandar Malaysia (JMCIM) meeting, which was originally scheduled to take place earlier this week on Monday.

Singapore, which has formally protested against the intrusion, said his presence on a Malaysian vessel in Singapore's territory had rendered holding the JMCIM "untenable". Malaysia has maintained that he was in Malaysian waters.

Mr Saifuddin yesterday said the channels of communication between the two countries remain open. This was evident when Datuk Seri Azmin met Dr Balakrishnan earlier this week despite the postponement of the JMCIM.

"We have always safeguarded our sovereignty and our independence. We just have to continue talking to our Singapore counterparts," Mr Saifuddin said.



TALKS STILL ONGOING

**Our relations with Singapore remain good. There are some issues but we are talking to each other, and that is very important... Most importantly, the discussions are going on.**



**MALAYSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SAIFUDDIN ABDULLAH**, on bilateral ties between Singapore-Malaysia.



The newly crowned Pahang Sultan's younger brothers, Tengku Abdul Rahman Sultan Ahmad Shah (left) and Tengku Arif Temenggong Pahang Tengku Fahd Mu'adzam Shah Ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah. There have been many posts on social media on Tengku Fahd's good looks, with one post receiving more than 700 retweets and 1,000 likes. PHOTO: BERNAMA

## Younger brother of new Sultan sets hearts aflutter

**PETALING JAYA** • It is not just Sultan Abdullah Ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah, 59, who was sworn in on Tuesday as the sixth ruler of Pahang, who is in the news.

His younger brother, Tengku Arif Temenggong Pahang Tengku Fahd Mu'adzam Shah Ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah, has also caught people's attention – thanks to his good looks.

Some have called him their Prince Charming, while others said

he looks like a model.

Social media is all abuzz about the handsome, 25-year-old son of Sultan Ahmad Shah Al Musta'in Billah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Abu Bakar and Sultanah Kalsom Abdullah.

"Following the proclamation of Tengku Abdullah (now Sultan Abdullah), I now notice Tengku Fahd. I think it is not too much if I call him Pa-hunk," said Twitter user \_TheJebs.

Another user posted: "Why is everyone suddenly obsessed with Tengku Fahd? He is Pahang's best-kept secret. And I want him to remain as Pahang's best-kept secret because he is Pahang's hot prince and not your hot prince."

Referring to Brunei's Prince Abdul Mateen, Twitter user Firrrdaus posted: "Tengku Fahd all the way! Bye Mateen."

Tengku Fahd is the founder and head of the Sultan Ahmad Shah Environment Trust.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

The post has received more than 700 retweets and 1,000 likes.

Twitter user haziqridzuanHR posted, along with pictures of the Prince: "Can I make you a model for a character in my next novel?"

Another user posted: "Why is everyone suddenly obsessed with Tengku Fahd? He is Pahang's best-kept secret. And I want him to remain as Pahang's best-kept secret because he is Pahang's hot prince and not your hot prince."

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BEST-KEPT SECRET

**Why is everyone suddenly obsessed with Tengku Fahd? He is Pahang's best-kept secret.**



**AT TWITTER USER**, gushing about Tengku Arif Temenggong Pahang Tengku Fahd Mu'adzam Shah Ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah.

## Umno leader claims trial to 12 counts of graft, money laundering

**KUALA LUMPUR** • Umno supreme council member Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim claimed trial yesterday to three counts of graft amounting to RM5.2 million (S\$1.7 million) over allegations that he helped a Malaysian company to obtain government contracts.

The 53-year-old Baling MP and former Tabung Haji chairman was accused of receiving RM1.2 million, RM2 million and RM2 million in three separate transactions from one Mohammad Redzuan Mohanan Abdullah, who is the director of Menuju Asas, as a reward for helping the company.

The projects, valued at RM842.2 million, involved upgrading and roadworks in Perak and Kedah.

Abdul Azeez allegedly committed the offences at three different

banks between Dec 8, 2010, and April 10 last year.

He was charged under the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009, which carries a maximum jail term of up to 20 years and a fine of no less than five times the amount of gratification or RM10,000, whichever is higher, upon conviction.

His older brother, Abdul Latif, 61, was charged with two counts of abetting him in two alleged transactions involving RM2 million each.

Abdul Azeez was also charged with nine counts of money laundering under the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001.

He allegedly received proceeds of unlawful activities amounting to

RM139.4 million from several companies between March 2010 and August last year.

Sessions court judge Azura Alwi

fixed bail at RM800,000 in one

s surety for Abdul Azeez and RM500,000 in one surety for Abdul Latif. The case is fixed for mention on March 27.

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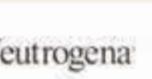
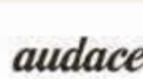
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The 500-man "Impression Lijiang" show in China's Yunnan province features the Jade Dragon Snow Mountain in the background. It is directed by renowned film director Zhang Yimou, and is a main tourist attraction in Lijiang. ST FILE PHOTO

# China urged to tap potential of domestic tourism sector

Experts say easing rules, improving infrastructure could boost economy

**Lim Yan Liang**  
China Correspondent  
In Beijing

Cross the Manchurian steppes by caravan or drive to key points along the ancient Silk Road from Urumqi to Xi'an: Such holidays may soon be possible if the tourism authorities get the green light to liberalise China's tourist industry.

Academics and officials have called on Beijing to accelerate the opening of the domestic tourism industry over the next two years to tap its potential as a growth engine amid China's slowing economy.

At the same time, the government needs to be watchful for unsustainable investment and blatant copying of tourist concepts that threaten to sully the reputation and long-term financial health of the whole industry, they said.

"For 40 years, we've developed at high speed without looking back, but now we are at a point where we need to consider the way forward," said National Tourism Administration deputy director Du Yili.

She said the government has allowed unrestrained investment in tourism over the last few decades, which worked when the economy was growing at double-digit rates.

But this led to wastefulness because of "unclear concepts, blind construction, imitation and repetitiveness", said a report, citing the proliferation of private theme parks and purpose-built "characteristic towns" by local governments.

This extends to cultural shows, the most famous of which is the Impression series directed by acclaimed director Zhang Yimou.

About 20 new shows are launched each year, even though less than 15 per cent are profitable, said chief analyst Mao Xiubing of Daolue Research Institute.

"These shows can cost up to 400 million yuan (\$82 million) to produce, and either they make massive amounts of money, or they close up in a year or two," he said.

The bright spot is that China can count on a long period of intermediate growth in its tourism sector if it makes the right moves at this critical juncture, researchers say.

Pointing to the experience of developed countries like Japan, report co-author Jin Zhun found that as these societies moved towards high-income status and overall GDP growth fell, household consumption of culture and leisure continued to climb for 14 years.

This could happen because Tokyo instituted a series of market-oriented reforms and introduced policies that revitalised the tourism industry and spurred innovation, said Professor Jin, who heads the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Tourism Research Centre.

China therefore needs to undertake greater reform and improve the quality of local tourism offerings, so that a more demanding middle class does not have to seek its thrills abroad, he added.

This includes opening up the market to foreign players and improving policy and infrastructure for short-term apartment rentals, and aspirational holidays such as yachting, self-driving and caravanning, which are underdeveloped, according to the paper.

Australia says Chinese visitors who go camping and caravanning make up its biggest overseas market in this sector. And the Australian Caravan Industry Association released a report last year to help its members cater to the booming Chinese market.

Prof Jin added: "Why is it that every time the holiday season comes around, the middle class leaves the country? It's because domestic tours aren't meeting their needs."

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# Abu Sayyaf kidnap victim rescued

Brigadier-General Ariel Felicidario, acting commander of Joint Task Force Basilan, with Indonesian Samsul Saguni, who was rescued on Tuesday. Mr Samsul was kidnapped on Sept 11 by Abu Sayyaf from a Malaysian fishing boat near Semporna, Sabah. PHOTO: WESTERN MINDANAO COMMAND, ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES



Indonesian man abducted in Sept in waters off Sabah was last seen in video pleading for life

Raul Dancel  
Philippines Correspondent  
In Manila

Philippine security forces have rescued an Indonesian man last seen in a viral video pleading for his life four months after he and another Indonesian man were taken by Abu Sayyaf militants in waters off Semporna, Sabah.

Mr Samsul Saguni, 40, was kidnapped from a Malaysian fishing boat on Sept 11, together with Mr Usman Yusof, 35.

They were taken to Abu Sayyaf's hideouts in Sulu province in the Philippines.

Mr Usman managed to flee and was rescued by troops from the Marine Battalion Landing Team 3 on Dec 6.

Mr Samsul was "rescued through the efforts" of former Sulu governor Abdul Sakur Tan and soldiers from the 41st Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army on Tuesday,

said the military's Western Mindanao Command.

He was taken to Mr Tan's house in Maimbung town in Sulu at around 4.30pm on Tuesday, it added in a statement on its website yesterday.

Mr Samsul was later turned over to Lieutenant-Colonel Alaric Avelino, commanding officer of the 41st Infantry Battalion, according to ABS-CBN News. He was then de-briefed and examined.

"The medical results showed that the victim is physically healthy," said Brigadier-General Divino Rey Pabayo, head of the 11th Infantry Division. He added that Mr Samsul was set to be handed over to Indonesian officials yesterday.

In a video that went viral on social media, Mr Samsul was seen in a freshly dug hole, crying and pleading: "Please help, boss! Please help, boss! Please help!"

The video was purportedly sent by his captors to demand ransom from the owner of the fishing boat he had worked on, The Star Online reported.

The militants had demanded 500,000 pesos (\$S13,000) for the men's release, according to Philippine media reports.

Brig-Gen Pabayo said Abu Sayyaf was still holding five foreigners and three Filipinos in Sulu.

The small but brutal militant group has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Though the group officially has a separatist, Islamist agenda, it has, for decades, capitalised on the instability in the war-torn southern island of Mindanao to generate tens of millions of dollars from piracy and ransom payments.

Since it turned kidnapping into a lucrative trade, the group has already beheaded an American, a Malaysian, two Canadians and a German.

A faction led by Filipino militant Isnilon Hapilon took part in the assault on the southern Islamic city of Marawi in May 2017.

His fighters, along with those from Marawi's prominent Maute clan and extremists from abroad, stormed and took control of a quarter of the city for five months in what became the Philippines' biggest security crisis in years.

Hapilon was killed as the Marawi conflict drew to a close.

But other Abu Sayyaf factions that did not participate in the siege have remained active in Sulu and in their other stronghold, Jolo island.

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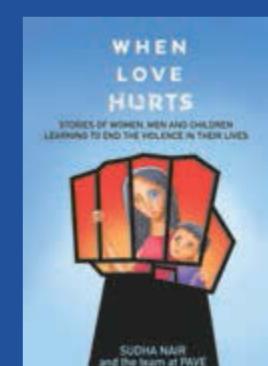
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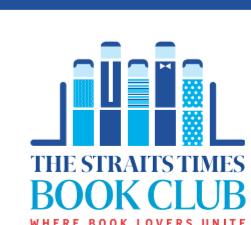
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# 2 rival parties tie up to take on BJP at polls

**Samajwadi-BSP alliance in key Uttar Pradesh state formidable, and may hurt Modi: Experts**

**Nirmala Ganapathy**  
India Bureau Chief  
In New Delhi

A tie-up between two rival regional parties in India's most populous and politically important state Uttar Pradesh could hurt Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the polls this year.

In the 545-seat Lower House of Parliament in the capital New Delhi, the northern state accounts for 80 parliamentary seats – the most among all the states. The BJP holds 69 of those seats.

Long-time rivals Samajwadi Party (SP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) have announced a tie-up to take on the BJP in the next general election, which must be held by May. The two parties will contest 38 seats each.

The SP or Socialist Party is led by Mr Akhilesh Yadav, and its support base is made up of Muslims and Yadavs, traditionally a caste involved in agriculture. The BSP is led by Ms Mayawati, a leader of the Dalits, who at one time were called untouchables.

Analysts said the tie-up could turn out to be a formidable alliance against the BJP.

The Hindu nationalist BJP garnered a landslide win in the 2014 general election, partly because it won 71 seats in Uttar Pradesh, which gave it a final tally of 282 out of 543 seats in the Lower House. Subsequent by-elections in Uttar Pradesh saw the number of BJP-held seats falling to 69.

Dr Sandeep Shastri, a political analyst and pro-vice-chancellor of Jain University, said: "Uttar Pradesh becomes very important for the BJP. If they lose numbers, it has a very significant impact... The BJP will have to take into account that if the SP and BSP votes get pooled, it becomes a big chunk."

"The moot question is: Will political arithmetic combine with electoral chemistry? For the last two to three decades, these parties have been intense rivals. So, for local leaders of both parties to work together, it would be very interesting to see."

The SP and BSP, as an experiment, worked together in by-elections last year in Gorakhpur and Phulpur, both in Uttar Pradesh, and managed to take the two seats from the BJP. The ruling party is also facing anti-incumbency sentiment in the state.

Uttar Pradesh, with a population of about 220 million people, has always been a political battleground that has shaped national politics because of its large representation in Parliament.

It is often said that the road to Delhi runs through Uttar Pradesh, meaning it plays a critical role in winning national elections.

In the 2014 polls, Mr Modi signalled the importance of the state for the BJP by contesting and winning in the holy city of Varanasi. The main opposition Congress party won 44 seats across the country, SP had five in Uttar Pradesh and BSP did not win any seats.

Analysts said the coming together of the two regional parties signalled the beginning of some form of consolidation of the opposition parties.

Mr Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, a Delhi-based writer and journalist, said: "The tie-up opens up multiple battles for Mr Modi. It is not Mr Modi against one person. He has to face different challenges in different states."

"It makes things more difficult than it appeared a few weeks ago for Mr Modi, especially after the state election results in the three states."

The three states were Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh.

The BJP received an electoral jolt in those polls last month, losing the three stronghold states to Congress, though Mr Modi remains the most popular leader in the country.

The loss is seen to have invigorated the opposition parties, including Congress, which is trying to cobble together its own alliance.

Still, the BJP has dismissed talk that the SP-BSP alliance will hurt it. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a member of the BJP, told reporters that the alliance was "created out of fear of the BJP".

He said: "This is politics of trade, which will not be accepted by the people of the state."

ing for each other's candidates, and Dr Verma said it remains to be seen if SP supporters will vote for a BSP candidate and vice versa.

He added that it is also unclear if the BSP-SP alliance will work out. If it does not, "the BJP doesn't have to panic, it's all a game of numbers", said Dr Verma.

gnirmala@sph.com.sg



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who is a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party, says the tie-up between the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party is a result of their fear of the BJP. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

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# Climate risks among top concerns of WEF leaders

Poll shows business chiefs also worry about data theft, worsening state of global relations

LONDON • The risks of catastrophic weather and flooding from climate change are exercising business leaders heading into next week's World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, the organisation said yesterday.

An annual WEF report – based on a survey of about 1,000 respondents drawn from the Davos community of business leaders, politicians, civil society and academics – shows climate change has become the dominant concern for three years running.

Data theft and cyber attacks have joined climate change in the top tier of worries, but respondents also pointed to anxiety about worsening international relations and the risk

that poses for the world economy.

Just under 90 per cent of people in the survey, held last September and October, expected international trading rules and agreements to weaken further, as US President Donald Trump's "America First" agenda undermines the architecture on which global trade has been built.

"With global trade and economic growth at risk in 2019, there is a more urgent need than ever to renew the architecture of international cooperation," WEF president Borge Brende said in a release accompanying the 114-page report.

"We simply do not have the gunpowder to deal with the kind of

RUNNING ON EMPTY

We simply do not have the gunpowder to deal with the kind of slowdown that current dynamics might lead us towards.

“

MR BORGE BRENDE, president of the WEF

slowdown that current dynamics might lead us towards. What we need now is coordinated, concerted action to sustain growth and to tackle the grave threats facing our world today," he said.

The growing risk of Britain crashing out of the European Union with-

out a Brexit deal in late March is also worrying global institutions and will figure at the meetings next week in the Swiss Alps, with a number of British and EU officials attending.

Fully 90 per cent of the respondents expected "further economic confrontation between major powers in 2019", although the survey was conducted before Mr Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed last month to try to negotiate a peace pact on their tariff war.

Mr Trump has also withdrawn the US from the Paris agreement on climate change.

While other countries agreed at UN talks last month on a common action plan, the most vulnerable states along with environmentalists warned that the pact lacked the ambition needed to restrict carbon emissions.

The WEF report showed mount-

ing alarm about the risks of extreme weather and a failure to take mitigating action as temperatures rise, detailing the possibility of many low-lying cities in Asia, Europe and North America being wiped off the map by flooding.

China alone has more than 78 million people in cities at risk of inundation, a number increasing by 3 per cent every year, the report said, citing World Bank research.

Zurich Insurance Group chief risk officer Alison Martin said last year was already marked by historic wildfires, heavy flooding and rising greenhouse gas emissions.

"It is no surprise that in 2019, environmental risks once again dominate the list of major concerns. So, too, does the growing likelihood of environmental policy failure or a lack of timely policy implementation," Ms Martin warned in the WEF press release.

For environmentalists, such a policy failure has been made more likely by the election of the far-right leader Jair Bolsonaro as Brazil's president. He is due to address the annual WEF gathering.

Like Mr Trump, Mr Bolsonaro is a climate sceptic. But the two populist leaders will not get to rub shoulders in Switzerland after the US President cancelled his trip owing to the Budget crisis in Washington. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Former Mexican president Enrique Pena Nieto (left) allegedly reached out to Joaquin Guzman Loera in 2012.

**El Chapo paid former president \$135m bribe, court told**

NEW YORK • Former Mexican president Enrique Pena Nieto took a US\$100 million (\$S135 million) bribe from Joaquin Guzman Loera, the infamous crime lord known as El Chapo, according to a witness at Guzman's trial.

The stunning testimony was delivered on Tuesday in a New York courtroom by Alex Cifuentes Villa, a Colombian drug lord who worked with Guzman from 2007 to 2013, when the kingpin was hiding from the law at a series of remote ranches in the Sierra Madre.

"Mr Guzman paid a bribe of US\$100 million to President Pena Nieto?" Mr Jeffrey Lichtenman, one of Guzman's lawyers, asked Cifuentes during cross-examination.

"Yes," Cifuentes said. Guzman may offer more details soon. Shortly after the jury was excused at around 4.30pm on Tuesday, Mr Lichtenman submitted his client's name to the prosecution as a potential witness for the defence.

Guzman's testimony would be a stunning development. While his lieutenants have shared details about the Sinaloa cartel's operations, the kingpin himself could offer even more intimate information, such as how he possibly bribed a president of Mexico.

According to Cifuentes, Mr Pena Nieto first reached out to Guzman around when he was elected president in late 2012, asking the drug lord for US\$250 million in exchange for calling off a nationwide manhunt for him. But Guzman made a counter-offer, Cifuentes said, saying he would give Mr Pena Nieto US\$100 million.

"The message was that Mr Guzman didn't have to stay in hiding," Mr Lichtenman asked.

"Yes," Cifuentes said, "that very thing is what Joaquin said to me." Mr Lichtenman, quoting Cifuentes' notes from an interview he gave to the US authorities in 2016, asked whether Mr Felipe Calderon, who preceded Mr Pena Nieto as Mexico's president, took a bribe in 2008 from one of Guzman's rivals, the Beltran-Leyva brothers.

"I don't recall this incident very well," Cifuentes answered. He added later: "Right now, I do not remember that."

Mr Pena Nieto and Mr Calderon could not be reached for comment.

While other witnesses at Guzman's trial in the Brooklyn district court have testified about payoffs from traffickers to Mexican police and public officials, the testimony about Mr Pena Nieto was the most egregious claim. If true, it suggests corruption by drug cartels had reached into the highest level of Mexico's political establishment.

There had been hints from the start of the trial in November that Mexican leaders might have been compromised by dirty money. NYTIMES



Armed soldiers patrolling the streets as people queue at a supermarket in Harare, Zimbabwe, yesterday. The capital was gripped by three days of protests after President Emmerson Mnangagwa increased the price of fuel by more than 150 per cent. Many accuse Mr Mnangagwa of failing to live up to pre-election pledges. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Scores arrested in deadly Zimbabwe protests

HARARE • Scores of Zimbabweans, including a prominent activist, were detained yesterday, lawyers and witnesses said, as evidence began to emerge of a brutal crackdown on dissent by security forces.

Following two days of protests against fuel price hikes, residents said soldiers and police were patrolling Harare townships and at-

tacking people in their homes.

Zimbabweans had hoped President Emmerson Mnangagwa would make good on pre-election pledges to kick-start the economy. But since the November 2017 coup that ousted long-time leader Robert Mugabe, the country has fallen back into familiar ways.

Dollar shortages are battering

the economy, rocketing inflation is destroying the value of citizens' savings and the government is reacting forcefully to crush dissent.

An Internet blackout entered its third day yesterday, leaving many without access to social media.

Mr Mnangagwa, on a trip to Russia and the World Economic Forum in Davos, said he was "deeply sad-

dened" by the protests.

"Resolving Zimbabwe's economic challenges is a monumental task, and while it may not always feel that way, we are moving in the right direction," he said on Facebook.

There was no immediate comment from the government on the series of arrests or allegations of vio-

lence by police and soldiers.

Yesterday was the third and final day of the stay-at-home protest called by unions in response to Mr Mnangagwa increasing the price of fuel by more than 150 per cent.

Mr Evan Mawarire, a pastor who rose to prominence as a Mugabe critic, was charged with inciting violence, his lawyer said.

Police said on Tuesday they had arrested more than 200 people. Three people, including a police officer, died in violent demonstrations on Monday. REUTERS



## Baby Shark creator to expand kiddie content

SEOUL • Baby Shark (Doo Doo Doo Doo Doo) is the YouTube sensation that has been viewed more than two billion times and made the Billboard Hot 100 chart for a second straight week.

The South Korean company behind the viral song about a family of sharks is now seeking to capitalise on the success by expanding its kid-oriented entertainment business.

Seoul-based SmartStudy's Pinkfong is planning to release short videos via streaming service Netflix, a cartoon series and a musical in North America this year, said one of the company's founders in an interview this week.

He added that the start-up, which has recently signed various merchandising deals, may also develop games that work with Amazon's Alexa and Alphabet's Google Home voice assistants.

The popularity of the sing-along

builds on South Korea's emergence as an entertainment powerhouse.

Korean pop, or K-pop, has grown into a US\$5 billion (\$S6.8 billion) industry thanks to the success of the likes of boyband BTS.

"We've added the K-pop factor into our songs, such as very trendy beats and upbeat rhythms," said Mr Lee Seung-kyu, who is also SmartStudy's chief financial officer.

Unlike BTS, SmartStudy has found its niche with kiddie pop, targeting children aged between one and four with dance-along videos. It was established in 2010 by three former online gaming employees.

Mr Lee, 44, said the Korean educational app-to-video-maker's early days were tough but its business grew fast after the Baby Shark video went viral.

Revenue at closely-held SmartStudy is expected to have increased to 37 billion won (\$S44.7



Viral YouTube video Baby Shark (Doo Doo Doo Doo Doo) has been viewed more than two billion times. PHOTO: PINKFONG/YOUTUBE

million) last year from 27.2 billion won and net income probably more than doubled to about five billion won, according to Mr Lee.

Digital sales account for about 70 per cent of its total business, with the rest coming from mainly physical sales such as merchandising, he said.

Samsung Publishing, which owns 25 per cent of SmartStudy, surged

by the 30 per cent daily limit to a record high in Seoul yesterday.

For its next act, Mr Lee said the company will be developing content for older children, aged five to eight, and that he is looking beyond sharks and closely examining penguins.

"I really liked Madagascar," Mr Lee said, in reference to the DreamWorks Animation films that featured some penguins. BLOOMBERG

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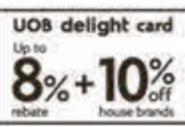
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## News analysis

# Increasing polarisation points to stark choice in 2020 US poll

Americans will either have to consolidate to the right or change course completely



**Nirmal Ghosh**

US Bureau Chief  
In Washington

In less than two weeks since taking her seat in the house, Bronx-born Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, at 29 the youngest congresswoman ever, has elicited some of the sharpest reactions to a freshly minted representative on Capitol Hill – out of proportion, many analysts say, to her age and inexperience.

The strongest focus is not on her age, her middle-class background nor her Puerto Rican descent – though all have been raised, ridiculed, challenged or alluded to.

It is her ideas. Ms Ocasio-Cortez, a democratic socialist, advocates a “Green New Deal” – an economy that puts the climate and the environment first, phasing out fossil fuels.

Like the most prominent

member of the group, Senator Bernie Sanders, she also advocates things like free healthcare and high taxes on the wealthiest.

These ideas have support. A Hill-HarrisX survey conducted last weekend after the newly elected congresswoman called for raising the highest tax rate to 70 per cent found that 59 per cent of registered voters supported it.

But “socialism” has long been a pejorative term in the United States. Unsurprisingly therefore, her proposals have been met with a chorus of disapproval.

An array of conservative and right-wing media organisations and personalities have attacked the congresswoman from New York. The conservative Fox News –



The rise of Ms Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a democratic socialist, could shift the Democratic Party more to the left, say analysts. PHOTO: NYTIMES

## IGNORANCE ABOUT SOCIALISM

The majority of American millennials identify as socialist, according to surveys by both Reason-Rupe and the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. That's the bad news. The good news is that just 32 per cent of millennials can define socialism.

“

RADIO SHOW HOST AND CONTRIBUTOR TO THE CONSERVATIVE DAILY WIRE  
MICHAEL KNOWLES, writing for Fox News.

where hosts Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson and Laura Ingraham are among President Donald Trump's most effective amplifiers – has joined the howls of derision.

Ms Ocasio-Cortez may be the voice of the “ignorant generation”, Mr Michael Knowles, radio show host and contributor to the conservative Daily Wire wrote for Fox News.

“The majority of American millennials identify as socialist, according to surveys by both Reason-Rupe and the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. That's the bad news. The good news is that just 32 per cent of millennials can define socialism,” he wrote.

Ms Ocasio-Cortez's critics, citing examples like Venezuela, disparage her ideas as disastrous Latin American-style socialism.

When democratic socialists say Scandinavia is the real model, critics deride the high tax welfare system – which is actually not socialism; some label it “compassionate capitalism” – as a failure.

The brouhaha is a symptom of a well-documented drift to either end of the political spectrum.

In Washington last week, Mr Thomas Donohue, CEO of the US Chamber of Commerce, in a keynote speech, urged politicians in Washington to “rebuild the middle”.

But that is seen by most analysts as wishful thinking.

The Republican Party has shifted further to the right than the Democratic Party to the left, analysts say.

But the rise of Ms Ocasio-Cortez, and the rise to national recognition of Texas Democrat Beto O'Rourke, have pumped more oxygen into the socialist wing of the Democratic Party. The party could shift more to the left, analysts say. The gulf between right and left is only widening.

This points to an immensely critical presidential election in 2020, when Americans will vote on two very different paths – to change course entirely, or continue and consolidate the gains of a right wing emboldened under President Trump.

“Most Americans tend to fall in the middle ideologically,” says Dr J. Michael Bitzer, professor of American Politics at Catawba College in North Carolina. “On the flip side, most Americans are partisan even if they are independent-leaning. This says we are very polarised, and there is not a middle to find any more.”

“The 2020 election is going to be pivotal. The tension is going to be where does the country continue – either centre-right, or do the millennials take over and it shifts to centre-left.”

Being too left of centre has its own perils. “Republicans love to have someone like Ocasio-Cortez around,” Dr Glenn Altschuler, professor of American Studies at Cornell, told The Straits Times.

“They would like to see a nominee of the Democratic Party who is identifiably on the left. Establishment Democrats recognise that there are dangers in some of the positions she takes in part because they can be characterised as socialist.”

Separately, a political risk analyst who asked not to be named, told The Straits Times: “If the Democrats' candidate is considered too far left of centre, it would be probably the biggest assist to Trump's campaign he could hope for.”

The politics of extremes has some analysts worried over potential violence in the run-up to 2020.

But the future is not necessarily that bleak, says Dr H.W. Brands, professor of history at the University of Texas in Austin.

“The most striking feature of the 2018 (midterm) Congressional elections was how many seats flipped from Republicans to Democrats,” he said. “It is a start back towards a place where ‘conservative Democrat’ and ‘liberal Republican’ are not utter oxymorons.”

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# US Republicans break ranks over sanctions on Russian oligarch

Move to side with Democrats in vote comes amid questions over Trump's Moscow ties

WASHINGTON • A group of 11 Republican senators broke ranks with their leadership and the administration to side with Democrats in a showdown over sanctions on Russia, underscoring the political sensitivity of the issue amid questions about President Donald Trump's relationship with Moscow.

The Republicans voted with Democrats seeking to keep sanctions in place on companies controlled by an influential Russian oligarch with connections to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The move by the 11 Republicans on Tuesday allowed Senate Democrats to advance a measure that would reverse a decision last month by the Treasury Department to lift sanctions that it imposed last year on companies controlled by Mr Oleg Deripaska, including the aluminium giant Rusal.

The Treasury Department's decision would leave in place personal sanctions on Mr Deripaska and require him to give up control over Rusal and two linked companies, EN+ and JSC EuroSibEnergo.

The measure still needs to clear several more hurdles, and proponents need to attract at least two more Republican votes to win final passage in the Senate.

But the vote was a symbolic crack in the Republican Party, and came despite opposition from majority leader Mitch McConnell, and a last-ditch plea by Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

The vote in some ways forced Republicans to choose between the party's traditional foreign policy, which has long supported a tougher line on Russia, and Mr Trump, whose warmer stance towards Russia has inflamed questions about Moscow's efforts in 2016 to help elect him.

The Treasury Department last April announced the sanctions on Mr Deripaska, his companies and those of other Russian oligarchs in retaliation for Russian meddling in the US presidential election.

The announcement was touted as evidence that the administration was taking a tough stance against Moscow despite Mr Trump's equivocation on Russian interference and his warm words for Mr Putin.

But the Treasury Department repeatedly delayed the full implementation of the sanctions against the three Deripaska companies amid an aggressive lobbying and legal campaign in Washington by the companies and their allies.

They argued that the sanctions could have unintended negative effects on companies in the United States, Europe, Jamaica, Guinea and elsewhere by disrupting the supply of aluminium.

The Treasury Department echoed those concerns in announcing last month that it would lift the sanctions against the three Deripaska companies as part of an agreement that it said would reduce Mr Deripaska's ownership and control of the companies.

The move prompted howls of protest from Democrats and some Russia hawks, who accused the administration of going soft on Russia amid special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into whether the Trump campaign coordinated with Russia's election meddling.

Mr Deripaska has emerged as a bit character in the storylines around the investigation as a result of his payments to Paul Manafort, Mr Trump's former campaign chairman, who has been convicted and pleaded guilty to charges brought by Mr Mueller.

Democrats have urged the Treasury Department to postpone the final decision on sanctions relief for Mr Deripaska's companies until after Mr Mueller has concluded his investigation.

Mr Mnuchin visited Republican senators on Tuesday before the vote to implore them to support the sanctions relief.

The appearance followed a brief-



US sanctions on Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska and companies controlled by him are in force.

ances did not assuage doubts among the party's Russia sceptics that the deal with Mr Deripaska's companies sufficiently decreased his control.

"I don't like the way it's structured," said Republican Senator Marco Rubio, who voted with Democrats and has been among the party's leading critics of Russia.

The measure passed 57-42, with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (Democrat) missing the vote as she announced her first step to start a campaign for the party's 2020 presidential nomination.

The measure was to face another Senate vote - this one requiring 60 votes - as soon as yesterday.

Democrat Senator Chuck Schumer, the minority leader, who introduced the resolution, foreshadowed the way his party intended to frame the fight if it does not get its way.

"We're only a few Republican votes short of the US Senate telling Putin he can't run the show no matter what President Trump and his administration try to do," Mr Schumer said on Tuesday. "If Republican senators agree with Leader McConnell, who said that Putin is a 'thug', they'll vote yes tomorrow."

In addition to Mr Rubio, the other Republican senators who voted with Democrats were Mr John Boozman (Arkansas), Ms Susan Collins (Maine), Mr Tom Cotton (Arkansas), Mr Steve Daines (Montana), Mr Cory Gardner (Colorado), Mr Josh Hawley (Missouri), Mr John Kennedy (Louisiana), Ms Martha McSally (Arizona), Mr Jerry Moran (Kansas) and Mr Ben Sasse (Nebraska). NYTIMES

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# Aussie PM visiting Pacific islands to bolster relations

**Morrison's trip to Vanuatu, Fiji comes amid worries over China's growing influence**

**Jonathan Pearlman**  
For The Straits Times  
In Sydney

Mr Scott Morrison arrived in Vanuatu yesterday in a rare visit to the Pacific by an Australian Prime Minister to try and bolster ties amid concerns about China's growing influence in the region.

During the three-day trip, Mr Morrison will also visit Fiji.

After meeting Vanuatu Prime Minister Charlot Salwai, Mr Morrison said Australia would provide support in the areas of disaster and

cyclone relief, telecommunications, energy, transport and water.

Significantly, Canberra would also move to allow the importation of kava, a mildly intoxicating drink made from the kava shrub that is a major export for Vanuatu and is popular among Pacific islanders in Australia.

Mr Morrison said Australia and Vanuatu have pledged to deepen their defence and police ties, and are working on a bilateral security treaty that covers issues including drug trafficking and illegal fishing.

"We will work together to support a Pacific region that is secure

strategically, stable economically and sovereign politically," he added.

Mr Morrison's trip follows media reports last year that China was planning to build a military base in Vanuatu. The claim, although staunchly denied by China and Vanuatu, added to growing concerns about Australia's failure to focus on relations with surrounding countries in the South Pacific.

Vanuatu is heavily indebted to China, which reportedly accounts for about 40 per cent of the island's public debt. This has raised concerns that Beijing could effectively end up controlling assets or holding sway over Vanuatu if it cannot repay its loans.

Mr Morrison is accompanied on his trip by Mr Nick Warner, head of



Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and his wife, Mrs Jenny Morrison, being welcomed to the National Archives and Library in Port Vila, Vanuatu, by residents yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

the Office of National Intelligence, which coordinates the intelligence community and reports directly to the premier.

Mr Morrison insisted yesterday that his trip was not designed to

ward off China as a partner of choice, telling reporters: "We're

here because we are for the independent sovereignty and prosperity of Vanuatu, because they are our Pacific neighbours and family. That is why we're here."

Though some analysts have suggested that fears of Chinese influence in the Pacific are overhyped,

the concerns – which have received much media coverage – have clearly led to a renewed focus in Canberra on the region.

Late last year, Mr Morrison declared a "step up" in relations with the Pacific islands, including a A\$3 billion (\$2.9 billion) package to boost military engagement and to establish a bank to help fund local transport, water and other projects. These included plans to set up diplomatic postings in tiny Pacific nations such as Palau and Niue.

Canberra also agreed to spend about A\$137 million on an underwater telecommunications cable linking the Solomon Islands to Australia and Papua New Guinea in an apparent move to block Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei from developing the project.

China's ties have spread across the region, including a growing loans programme. An analysis by the Lowy Institute shows that China committed about US\$1.8 billion (\$2.4 million) in aid to South Pacific islands between 2006 and 2016, though this is less than Australia's provision of US\$7.7 billion.

Typically, Australian foreign ministers – rather than prime ministers – make visits to foster ties with Pacific nations. Yet Mr Morrison has opted to make the trip, even though he is behind in the opinion polls just months before elections and badly needs to focus on his domestic standing.

An expert on the Pacific, Dr Stewart Firth from the Australian National University, yesterday described the trip as a bid to play catch-up. "We've become aware suddenly of China's rise in the Pacific, which has been happening for many years," he told ABC News.

"In the Pacific, personal relationships matter a great deal and personal relationships between leaders are really vital. So that's something that Morrison is going to have to establish."

Mr Morrison's trip to Fiji is the first bilateral trip by an Australian prime minister.

The visit is expected to include discussion about Neil Prakash, who was born in Australia and fought for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

Canberra stripped him of his Australian citizenship on the basis that he was also a Fijian citizen because of his father. But Fiji was never consulted about the move and has since denied that Prakash, who is in prison in Turkey, is Fijian.

The issue has renewed a perennial criticism that Australia adopts a paternalistic approach to its smaller Pacific neighbours.

Mr Morrison will be hoping that he will not only clear up the status of Prakash, but also demonstrate a capacity to show respect for Australia's Pacific partners.

jonathanmpearlman@gmail.com

## BUILDING RAPPORT

We've become aware suddenly of China's rise in the Pacific, which has been happening for many years... In the Pacific, personal relationships matter a great deal and personal relationships between leaders are really vital. So that's something that Morrison is going to have to establish.

“

**DR STEWART FIRTH**, an expert on the Pacific, describing Prime Minister Scott Morrison's trip to the Pacific islands as an attempt to play catch-up.

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**TAKASHIMAYA SINGAPORE**

# Nairobi hotel siege over: Kenyan President

Al-Shaabab gunmen who killed 14 people 'eliminated' after 20-hour siege

NAIROBI • Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said yesterday that gunmen who stormed an up-market hotel complex, killing 14 people, had been "eliminated" after an almost 20-hour siege in which hundreds of civilians were rescued.

The attack was claimed by the Al-Qaeda-linked Somali group Al-Shaabab, which has repeatedly targeted Kenya since it sent its army into Somalia in October 2011 to fight the terrorist group.

At least one suicide bomber blew himself up and gunmen engaged security forces in many shoot-outs during the assault on the DusitD2 compound, which includes a 101-room hotel, spa, restaurant and office buildings.

The sight of armed militants and terrified civilians fleeing reminded Kenyans of a 2013 Al-Shaabab attack on the Westgate mall which left 67 dead in a siege that lasted four days and led to sharp criticism of the security response.

In a televised address, Mr Kenyatta said some 700 civilians had been evacuated throughout the attack at DusitD2, with the swift and effective work from security forces drawing widespread praise in local media.

"I can confirm that... the security operation at Dusit complex is over and all the terrorists eliminated," Mr Kenyatta said in a televised address to the nation.

"As of this moment, we have confirmation that 14 innocent lives were lost to the... terrorists, with others injured."

Police sources and a mortuary official had previously reported 15 dead. It was not clear how many attackers there were in total.

CCTV footage broadcast on local media showed four black-clad, heavily armed men entering the complex on Tuesday afternoon. At least one of them blew himself up at the start of the attack.

A police source said two attackers had been shot dead yesterday morning after a prolonged shootout. "The two had red bandanas tied around their foreheads and bullets strapped around their chests with several magazines each," the senior police officer said. "Each had an AK47. The guns have been secured."

Kenyan police chief Joseph Boinet said the attack began at about 3pm on Tuesday with an explosion targeting three cars in the parking lot and a suicide bombing in the foyer of the Dusit hotel.

Among the dead was an American citizen, a State Department official said. A mortuary official said the victims also included 11 Kenyans, a British victim and one with no papers, as well as an unidentified torso of a male adult.

Explosions and gunfire intensified from dawn until police managed to secure the complex mid-morning.

Distracted family members arrived at a nearby mortuary yesterday, where they said they had not been allowed to view the bodies.

A number of heavily armed foreign forces, who appeared to be from embassies based in Nairobi, were at the scene alongside Kenyan security officers.

One survivor rescued from the building told a local television station that the attackers were "very confident; they were people who knew what they were doing".

"Al-Shaabab has selected a target that is highly symbolic of Kenya's economic success and its latest attack is aimed at undermining foreign investment and the recovery of the country's tourism sector," said Mr Robert Besseling of EXX Intelligence, a risk consultancy on Africa.

An editorial in the Daily Nation newspaper said the attack was a stark reminder that Kenya's security challenges were far from over.

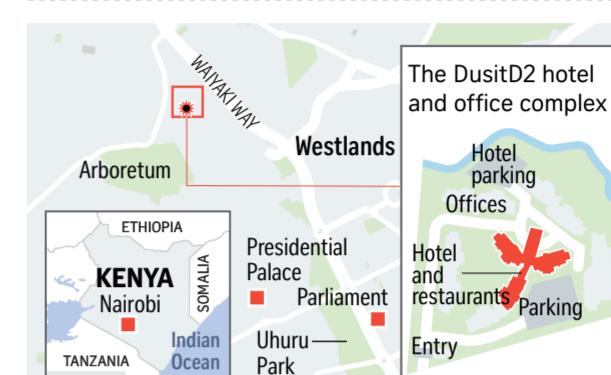
The last major attack in the country took place in 2015, when Al-Shaabab killed 148 people at the university in Garissa, eastern Kenya.

Since then, sporadic attacks have targeted security forces mostly in the remote northeast parts of the country.

"Just when we thought that things were calm, the gangs unleashed mayhem. For Kenyans the chilling reality is that the attacks are not ceasing," said the editorial. AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE



Attack in Nairobi



Source: AFP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Kenyan security personnel helping people to escape after militants stormed into the hotel on Tuesday. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

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**TAKASHIMAYASG**

# Shutdown more damaging than estimated: White House

Trump's stand-off with Democrats hurting growth, may push US economy into contraction, say advisers

WASHINGTON • The partial government shutdown is inflicting far greater damage on the US economy than previously estimated, the White House has acknowledged, as President Donald Trump's economists doubled projections of how much economic growth is being lost each week as the stand-off with Democrats continues.

The revised estimates from the

Council of Economic Advisers show that the shutdown, now in its fourth week, is beginning to have real economic consequences. The analysis, and other projections from outside the White House, suggests that the shutdown has already weighed significantly on growth and could ultimately push the US economy into a contraction.

While Vice-President Mike Pence



LAYING THE BLAME  
Congress needs to look at the harms that we're talking about and address them.

MR KEVIN HASSETT (above) White House Council of Economic Advisors chairman, blaming the Democrats for the economic damage.

Federal workers, contractors and supporters rallying outside the White House last week to demand that President Donald Trump and the Senate end the partial shutdown. PHOTO: NYTIMES

## Hundreds of caravan migrants enter Guatemala

AGUA CALIENTE (Guatemala) • Several hundred Honduran migrants in a new United States-bound caravan have crossed into Guatemala, as US President Donald Trump seized on news of the advancing group to try to build support for a wall along his country's border with Mexico.

About 360 Hondurans presented documents on Tuesday to pass legally through the Agua Caliente border crossing separating the two Central American nations. An additional 350 Hondurans crossed into Guatemalan territory but were being detained by migration officials checking their documents, according to pro-migrant activists travelling with them.

Some migrants ran towards the port of entry, where they were met by a large group of Guatemalan police, and nearly 150 were turned away because they lacked proper documents, police said.

"Those who (lack documents) will be turned back," said Ms Alejandra Mena, a spokeswoman for Guatemala's migration authority.

A second group of about 300 Honduran migrants walked along a highway and were expected to reach the same border crossing yesterday, said activists, while a smaller group of about 50 migrants had gathered in a plaza in the capital of El Sal-



Honduran migrants marching on after breaking through a police cordon in Agua Caliente. Nearly 150 were turned away because they lacked documents. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

vador with the intention of joining the caravan.

Central American caravans heading towards the US have inflamed the debate over the country's immigration policy, with Mr Trump drawing attention to the migrants to try to win back his plan to build a wall on the US-Mexico border.

As a partial government shutdown

reached its 25th day, Mr Trump invoked the new caravan on Twitter to pressure US lawmakers. Democrats have resisted his insistence that Congress provide US\$5.7 billion (\$7.7 billion) for wall funding.

"A big new caravan is heading up to our Southern Border from Honduras," he tweeted on Tuesday.

"Only a wall or steel barrier will keep our country safe! Stop playing political games and end the shutdown!"

Mr Trump has described the migrants as an invading force and he sent troops to reinforce the border last year. On Monday, the Pentagon announced it would extend the deployment of about 2,350 troops to the US border through to the end of September. REUTERS

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TAKASHIMAYASG

## Trump orders thousands back to work

WASHINGTON • The Trump administration has ordered thousands of furloughed federal employees back to work without pay to inspect planes, issue tax refunds, monitor food safety and facilitate the sale of offshore oil drilling rights, according to an updated contingency plan released on Tuesday.

The efforts in recent days illustrate how President Donald Trump is trying to limit the impact of the partial government shutdown and shield favoured industries as the funding impasse thwarts the deployment of new aircraft, stock offerings and even craft beers.

The Obama administration took the opposite approach in 2013 by erecting barricades around open-air monuments and largely closing national parks – then leveraging public anger to blame Republicans for halting government services.

Critics say the Trump administration is skirting federal law by continuing some functions amid the political stalemate between congressional factions and the President over whether to fund a wall on the US-Mexico border.

A 149-year-old law bars agencies from spending money Congress has not given them, with only limited exceptions for 'emergencies involving the safety of human life or the protection of property'.

"This administration is being creative in its ability to break the law and test the boundaries," said Mr Sam Berger, a senior adviser at the Centre for American Progress who worked at the Office of Management and Budget under former president Barack Obama.

"They are really walking up to and past that line," Mr Berger said.

"It's clear they are making politi-

cal calls, and they aren't letting decisions be dictated by sound management, by the law or by really anything other than the next 10 minutes of TV coverage and how they can win the day."

The responsibility for prosecuting violations of the 1870 Antideficiency Act falls to the Justice Department – and no one has ever been hauled to court to account for flouting the law.

It is not clear if anyone else would have standing to challenge agency spending and activities that continue amid a shutdown.

Pay cheques for some 800,000 government employees have been halted amid the lapses in federal funding, including about 420,000 who have been forced to work anyway.

Mr Trump was scheduled to sign legislation yesterday that would provide government employees with back pay after the shutdown ends.

The Trump administration is calling back some 46,000 furloughed employees, with many put to work issuing tax refunds even though the Treasury Department previously decided a shutdown would bar the activity.

The National Treasury Employees Union is suing the federal government for making those employees work without pay, arguing that forcing them to process tax refunds falls outside the scope of activities that should be permitted during a shutdown.

A federal judge in Washington on Tuesday rejected a request by that union and other federal workers to issue a temporary order compelling the US to pay its workers or let them take jobs elsewhere.

The plaintiffs included the Air Traffic Controllers Association, as work to patrol the skies continues amid the shutdown. The Federal Aviation Administration said on Tuesday it had "determined that after three weeks, it is appropriate to recall inspectors and engineers".

Braving freezing temperatures, dozens of federal workers and workers' rights activists in New York City gathered on Tuesday to protest against the longest government shutdown in US history, which was in its 26th day yesterday.

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# OPINION

The Straits Times says

## Sino-US ties: Better off together

**T**he first sign that the months-long trade war between the United States and China may be headed for a solution down the road emerged in Beijing last week. Officials met to build upon the fragile truce that US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping reached in Buenos Aires last December. At the month-end, their ministers will meet in Washington to narrow differences. If negotiations continue apace, a summit between the two presidents is likely. The world can use some good news. A new forecast by the World Bank estimates that global growth will slip to 2.9 per cent this year from last year's 3 per cent, largely because trade and manufacturing activity have softened. The American and Chinese

economies will not be spared. In China, fears of a slowdown and wariness of the aggressive Trump administration have replaced the buoyant mood seen after the 19th Party Congress. Beijing has especially low tolerance for turmoil this year. The 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown and the 100th anniversary of the May 4 student movement may be seized by dissidents to stir unrest. Mr Trump has taken credit for the upbeat US economy but feels the sting from volatile stock markets. Farmers in the Midwest, an important part of the American electoral demography, took a hit from the trade war and are restive.

Conditions are thus ripe for a deal. China has been making concessions over the past few

months. It reduced tariffs on car imports and agreed to buy more soya beans and other agricultural and industrial goods from the US. The Chinese have talked about "competitive neutrality" to level the playing field between privileged state-owned firms and multinationals. Unprecedented access has been granted to foreign firms, allowing Tesla to set up a fully owned factory, UBS to own a majority stake in a mainland brokerage joint venture, and Allianz to set up a wholly owned foreign insurance holding company. Several foreign firms have been given the leeway to build wholly owned manufacturing complexes. To greater scepticism, China has released rules to protect intellectual property, is planning a law to stop

forced technology transfer, and no longer promotes its "Made in China 2025" blueprint. The US has demanded mechanisms to ensure that promises made are kept. From Beijing, there is a degree of concurrence.

Underlying structural challenges remain and are not going away anytime soon. Also, neither side can be seen to surrender. But ways must be found to soothe Washington's concerns and restore China's access to US markets. If the moment is not seized, the consequences are clear: higher tariffs on Chinese goods soon, retaliation by Beijing, and the drifting apart of the world's largest economies. Geopolitical rivalry will spike and a new great game may unfold in South-east Asia.

### HomeFront

## Hard choices on surrogacy in Singapore

**In some Western societies, surrogacy arrangements are accepted. But Singapore has to find its own balance between allowing parents this option while preventing abuse of this practice, which can be exploitative of poor women.**



**Yuen Sin**

When reality star Kim Kardashian gave birth to her first child North six years ago, she had to deal with placenta accreta, a condition that can cause complications during pregnancy in which all or part of the placenta attaches to the womb.

"My doctor had to stick his entire arm in me and detach the placenta with his hand, scraping it away from my uterus with his fingernails. How disgusting and painful," she said on her blog, calling her daughter North's birth "the most painful experience of my life".

She also experienced similar issues when she gave birth to her second child in 2015. So when she wanted to try for another child in 2017, Kardashian and her rapper husband Kanye West decided she would not carry the child on her own.

Instead, an egg from Kardashian, that was fertilised with West's sperm, was implanted into the womb of a surrogate mother, a method known as gestational surrogacy in which a woman carries a baby who has no biological relationship with her. Traditional surrogacy, on the other hand, involves artificially inseminating the surrogate's own egg with the intended father's sperm, or with a donor's sperm.

According to reports, the surrogacy agency was paid a fee of US\$68,000 (S\$92,000), while the surrogate mother – a married housewife – received US\$45,000.

Earlier this month, Kardashian announced that she is expecting a fourth child through surrogacy.

In the United States, where commercial surrogacy is legalised in some states, such arrangements have become more common over the years.

But should Singapore attempt to keep up with the Kardashians when it comes to the issue of

allowing for surrogacy to take place here?

The issue was brought back into the public spotlight last month when the High Court granted a gay man's appeal to adopt his five-year-old biological child, who was conceived through commercial surrogacy in the United States. This will make it easier for the child, now an American citizen, to secure Singapore citizenship.

It has exposed grey areas in Singapore's regulation of surrogacy, and led some commentators to call for more clarity on the Government's stance on this issue.

Though Singapore does not have explicit laws against surrogacy here, the Ministry of Health (MOH) prohibits licensed healthcare institutions from carrying out surrogacy arrangements. Over the last decade, though, the Ministry of Social and Family Development has backed adoption bids by 10 married couples who had gone for surrogacy services abroad.

Following the High Court ruling, Minister for Social and Family Development Desmond Lee also said in Parliament this week that the authorities here will look into the complex issue of surrogacy, which has "ethical, social, health and legal implications for all parties involved".

"Whether we should completely prohibit surrogacy by Singaporeans within Singapore or all over the world... it's something that we must consider holistically and carefully, keeping in mind the wishes, aspirations and concerns of mothers who would otherwise not be able to conceive their own flesh and blood," he said, adding that adoption laws are also being reviewed.

As the Government ponders how Singapore should deal with surrogacy, and perhaps introduce guidelines that can better regulate existing practices, here are three issues that analysts say should be addressed:

### 1. Should overseas surrogacy be discouraged?

If the Government allows children who have been conceived abroad through surrogacy to be adopted by their parents here, or grants them

Singapore citizenship, it may have the unintended effect of encouraging citizens to pursue overseas surrogacy even if this is not condoned currently, says Singapore Management University (SMU) law professor Tan Seow Hon.

"As a result, the Government indirectly fuels the surrogacy industry and becomes complicit in ethical problems associated with surrogacy," she points out.

If the ethical problems associated with surrogacy are serious enough, the Government may choose to take action, such as by amending adoption laws to specifically prohibit adoption in surrogacy cases, she suggests, thus refusing to legitimise the parent-child relationship. This could then deter many from seeking surrogacy, she says.

If Singapore wants to crack down on such overseas arrangements, it may follow Australian states such as Queensland and New South Wales, which have made it an offence for residents to make commercial surrogacy arrangements in a foreign country.

But SMU law don Eugene Tan points out that such restrictions may not be effective in preventing

hopeful parents from pursuing surrogacy, as some may just ignore the local prohibition despite potential penalties. "People can and will pursue such transactions abroad and policing it is a challenge even if it is outlawed. If the relevant parties do not disclose a surrogacy, the Government will be none the wiser."

If the Government wants to permit Singaporeans to pursue surrogacy arrangements abroad, says veteran family lawyer Rajan Chettiar, proper guidelines should be introduced to better regulate the situation.

For instance, it can put up a list of approved countries where such services can be pursued by Singaporeans to ensure that such transactions comply with standards set by the Government, and provisions should be made for a child to be adopted by a couple when they return to Singapore.

A commissioning couple should also make a declaration of how much they have paid, adds Mr Chettiar. Given that it may not always be feasible to enter into altruistic surrogacy arrangements abroad, the issue of payment requires further exploration.

### 2. Should one pay for surrogacy services?

Commercial surrogacy involves a fee paid to the surrogate mother and is typically arranged by a broker. Last year, India's Lower House of Parliament passed a Bill that banned all forms of commercial surrogacy while allowing altruistic surrogacy for infertile, married Indian couples, following concerns about the exploitation of young, poor Indian women who bear babies for others.

National University of Singapore law professor Thio Li-ann says such arrangements raise troubling class issues. "Rich folk pay poor folk to be a baby container; the rich will be able to exploit the poor. The surrogacy option becomes a privilege for the wealthy," she adds, noting that the high cost involved in such transactions, which can go up to \$200,000, is "prohibitive for most people".

International activists, however, have said that a ban may simply drive such transactions underground. Though such a ban was enacted in 2016 in Cambodia, brokers and young women in the country continue to engage in such transactions for lucrative payouts

from Chinese clients even at the risk of jail time, according to news agency reports.

### 3. Can non-commercial surrogacy be allowed?

Some people reckon that since it is inevitable that some Singaporeans will engage in surrogacy, it is better to set some rules to govern this practice.

Mr Chettiar suggests that just as the Singapore Government has addressed potential ethical issues over adoption by having strict regulations against financial incentives and requiring comprehensive checks on parents, the same could be done for surrogacy.

As a first step to take, Singapore could look into allowing for altruistic surrogacy to take place domestically, where the surrogate mother is not paid or paid only for reasonable expenses, he adds. This is allowed in countries like Denmark and Belgium.

But Prof Tan Seow Hon points out that under one possible form of altruistic surrogacy, in which close relatives are asked to be surrogates for family members, some women may feel pressured into being surrogates.

It could also pose other complications, she notes. "What if the surrogate does not want to hand the child over because of her maternal bonds? If the law allows the surrogate to retain the child, it is not fair to the commissioning parents who provided the gametes (egg and sperm), but if the law takes the child from the surrogate, why should a gestational mother be treated as less than the genetic mother? There is no easy way to resolve the ethical dilemma."

Dr Chia Shi Lu, chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Health and an MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC, adds that clear definitions will have to be laid out to differentiate commercial transactions from altruistic ones if altruistic surrogacy is allowed.

"Even if you don't pay a sum of money (to the gestational mother)... would other expenses after the child has been delivered, such as hiring a maid for the surrogate or giving her a place to stay for a few years, be seen as financial incentives?"

To prevent a "slippery slope" of surrogacy backsliding into a selfish and convenient lifestyle option rather than medical necessity to have children, researcher Alexis Heng proposed – in a paper back in 2007 – that the MOH should review and approve surrogacy on a case-by-case basis for each and every individual patient if it is allowed here.

"Otherwise, the younger generation of Singaporean women might be encouraged to delay marriage and motherhood in pursuit of educational and career commitments if they realise that they can easily and conveniently opt to start a family later with gestational surrogates," he said.

Still, surrogacy can be a sensitive issue in Singapore's multi-religious context, as Islam and the Catholic faith may not condone surrogacy, says Mr Chettiar. "On that basis, it could be difficult for the Government (to take a stand), and it may need to talk to the groups to engage them if it does make a decision."

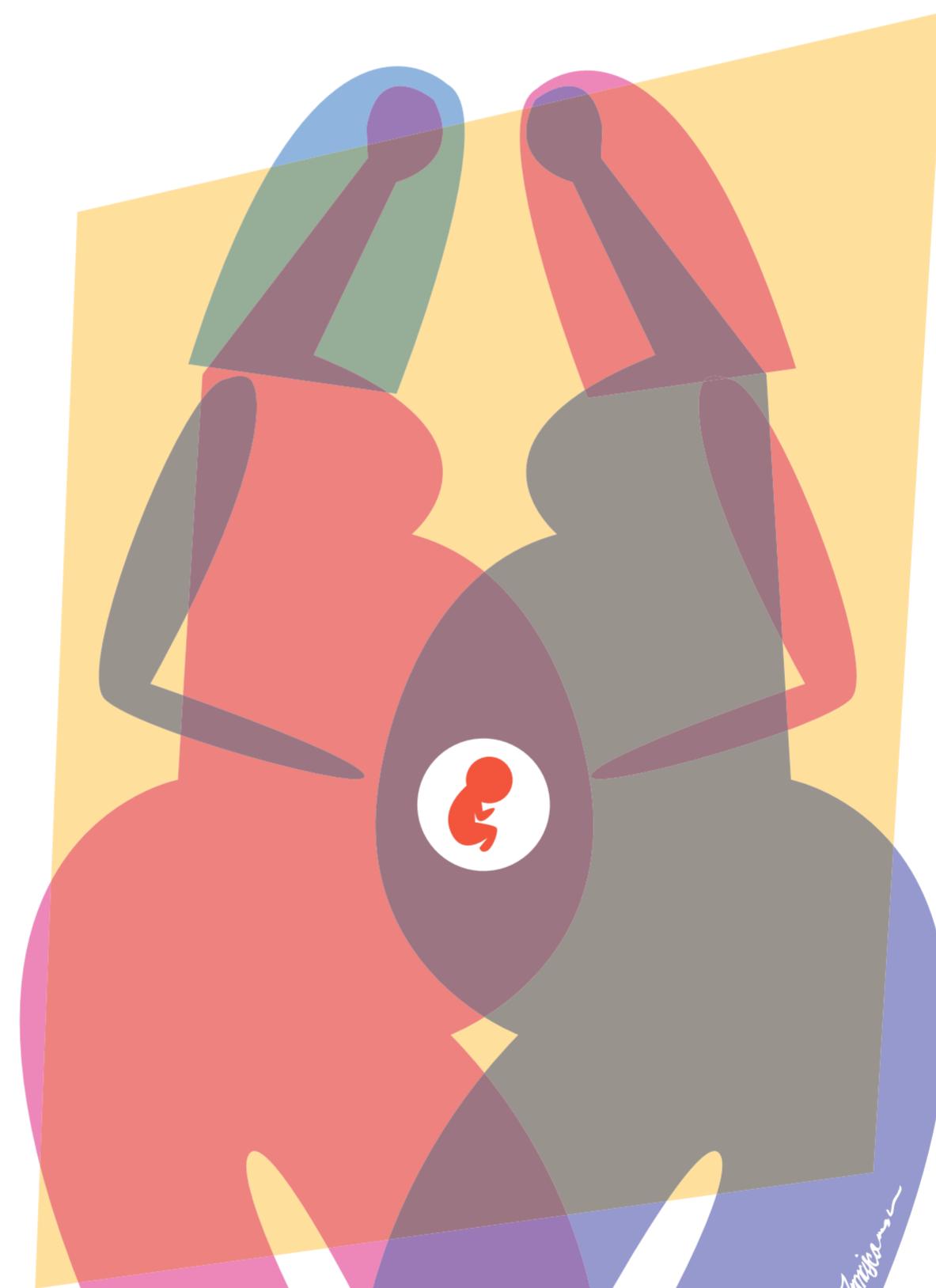
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# State-religion partnership benefits all

Success of Muis and other religious statutory boards as 'privileged interlocutor' is a beneficial partnership that Europe can learn from

**Mohammad Alami Musa**

For The Straits Times

When the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) marked its 50th anniversary last November, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong lauded the good work it had done for the Muslim community and Singapore over the last five decades.

Muis was established under the Administration of Muslim Law Act passed by Parliament in 1968. The Muslim community then was generally anxious and sceptical of the intention of the state in setting up Muis. There was severe criticism in the early years that it was the state's sinister motive to assert control over Muslims by its institutionalising of Islam.

Much of this negative perception has since disappeared and what remains today exists only among some observers who make criticisms about the religious life of the local Muslim community.

Having been established under a parliamentary act, Muis is an organ of the state.

The state's institutionalising of religion through its formation of religious boards is not necessarily a bad idea. It has benefited both state and religion.

#### BETRAYAL OF SECULARISM AND MULTI-CULTURALISM?

And this is something that Europe is slowly recognising.

Europe has long resisted the idea of institutionalising religion for two reasons. The first reason is that it does not want to betray its staunch belief in secularism that entails a strict separation between state and religion.

The institutionalising of religion requires the state to be involved in how religion is lived in society.

It is a blatantly untenable situation because Europe made a profound decision in its history to supplant religion as the foundation of social order and as the basis of the modern nation-state. This was due to the tragic history that Europe went through when there was so much bloodshed caused by centuries of religious wars due to the lethal mixing of religious authority and political power.

Europe never, ever wanted a repeat of this bloody era and finds the foray of state into religion repulsive.

The second reason is that the state's institutionalising of religion is also seen as an affront to multi-culturalism, which safeguards the freedom of individuals to embrace their unique beliefs and specific ways of life without the interference of the



state. Multi-culturalism is much cherished because it is one of the main planks of Western liberalism, just like secularism.

#### NEED FOR STATE-RELIGION PARTNERSHIP

However, there is now an evaluation in Europe about secularism and multi-culturalism.

There has been discussion about it departing from its strict observance of secularism, as well as multi-culturalism, to accommodate the state institutionalising of religion to a certain extent. This would impinge on established principles because the secular state will need to intervene in the religious life of its citizens, curtail their rights to believe in what they desire and limit the freedom for religion to exist independently.

This radical rethink has been triggered by the influx of a large number of Muslim migrants into Europe. Their presence has given rise to problems of integration due to tension in the misalignment between Islamic identity and national identity.

It has been a challenge largely due to the lack of credible representative Muslim organisations with good standing that can become the "privileged interlocutor". States need interlocutors to engage religious communities for both sides to be guided on issues of integration, citizenship and religion-state dynamics.

Otherwise, there may be an impasse between state and religious communities. The state's interest is to see the adaptation of religious life to suit the unique context of a secular state, and a religiously and culturally plural society.

The religious community's interest is to ensure that the adaptation of religious life to the context of society is not blameworthy, which means that it does not compromise the values and principles of the faith.

Notable examples of states' nuanced intervention in religious life are France and the Netherlands. The challenge in France is the choice of the privileged interlocutor between two competing major Islamic bodies as

**There is nothing wrong about the state institutionalising religion if both parties, state and religion, are in partnership for a win-win relationship to achieve the shared objective of attaining the well-being of society.**

the state intervenes to shape the Muslim community's understanding of Islam that is aligned to French Republican values.

The Netherlands, in the absence of a clear interlocutor, has to grapple with diverse political agendas of various Islamic groups for the state to have constructive dialogue with Muslims on the issue of their identity within its secular system.

There is nothing wrong about the state institutionalising religion if both parties, state and religion, are in partnership for a win-win relationship to achieve the shared objective of attaining the well-being of society.

#### SMALL PRICE FOR PEACE AND ORDER

Singapore realised this early in its founding. The State-religion partnership through the setting up of statutory boards like Muis, the Hindu Endowment Board, Hindu Advisory Board and the Sikh Advisory Board, has benefited all.

The State's formation of Muis has enabled the Muslim community to define for itself how it should lead its religious life in the secular state, and in a highly religiously plural and socially diverse society.

It has the power of legislation, the network to tap national resources and the organisational capability of a statutory board to effectively undertake a wide range of functions that no other Muslim

minority community elsewhere in the world can do.

This includes shaping a life anchored to the Islamic faith that is inclusive to embrace religious diversity; and adaptive in their religious understanding to participate as active members of a multi-religious society; and progressive to review existing religious ideas that impede social integration.

In doing so, Muis acts as the privileged interlocutor that understands what the State desires for positive inter-religious relations, mutual co-existence and religious harmony. It also understands what the community desires in preserving religious values and principles.

True, the setting up of religious boards through the state-religion partnership warrants communities to be judicious in their exercise of rights and freedom. However, having to limit some of their rights and freedom is a small price to pay for religious peace that is needed for the survival of society in a world fraught with religious-based conflicts.

stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Mohammad Alami Musa is head of the Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University, and president of Muis.

As part of its 50th anniversary celebrations, Muis held the Salam Singapore festival at Our Tampines Hub last September to express its appreciation to those who have contributed to the Muslim community and the Republic. Muis acts as the privileged interlocutor that understands what the State desires for positive inter-religious relations, mutual co-existence and religious harmony. It also understands what the community desires in preserving religious values and principles.

PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

# Plastics and veganism: The new ethical frontiers

**Michael Skapinker**

If you follow the rise of the ethical consumer for long enough, you become a little jaded because the rise tends to be followed by a dip.

The deadly collapse of a clothing factory complex in Bangladesh? Consumers say they will think more carefully about where their clothes come from – and then go back to buying cheap fast fashion online.

Avoiding companies that allegedly evade their taxes? The companies make a few adjustments and consumers carry on spending. Even one of the most extensive consumer campaigns ever – the boycott of South African goods during the apartheid years – was not as widely observed as its proponents thought. South Africa's exports actually rose during that period.

But are we now living in different times? Have social media and the

rapid spread of trends and causes made consumer campaigns more effective?

There are two recent examples that have been starting in their intensity: the move against plastics and the search for alternatives to meat.

The campaign against throwaway, single-use plastic has been building for some time. The need is urgent.

As the United Nations Environment Programme says: "Most plastics do not biodegrade." They block waterways and sewers, increasing the transmission of diseases such as malaria. Plastic pollutes the oceans.

"High concentrations of plastic materials, particularly plastic bags, have been found blocking the airways and stomachs of hundreds of species".

Governments have taken action. Rwanda and Kenya have banned plastic bags. In the UK in 2015, the government introduced a five

pence (nine Singapore cents) charge on plastic bags. In July last year, the government said plastic bag sales in the top seven supermarkets had dropped by 86 per cent.

So it seems consumers can be nudged in the right direction. The BBC television programme Blue Planet 2, with its revelations of the damage plastic was doing to sea life, gave the cause another shove.

But progress elsewhere is slow. Take the disposable coffee cup, made of paper but lined with plastic to waterproof it. In the United Kingdom, 2.5 billion used coffee cups are thrown away each year, according to a 2018 UK parliamentary committee report. The cups are hard to recycle; just 0.25 per cent are.

Starbucks says it has been offering a 25 pence discount to people who use reusable cups since it opened in the UK 21 years ago. Three years ago, it upped the discount to 50 pence, with no

noticeable impact, so it reduced it again. Last year it experimented in some stores, over a three-month period, with adding a 5 pence surcharge for paper cups. The use of reusable cups rose from 1.8 per cent to 5.8 per cent. It has since extended the charge to all its 950 UK outlets.

This is an impressive increase, but the numbers using reusable cups are still small. Why is the take-up less dramatic than the drop in supermarket carrier bags? Perhaps

it is easier to take old carrier bags to the supermarket than walk around with, and wash, a reusable cup.

Is veganism more than a fashion?

Many businesses think so, seeing veganism and vegetarianism as opportunities. Two companies, Impossible Foods, backed by Bill Gates and Singapore's investment company Temasek, and Beyond Meat have introduced plant-based burgers that are meant to have a similar taste and texture to meat.

Greggs, the UK bakery chain, has



The Impossible Burger 2.0, the new version of Impossible Foods' plant-based vegan burger that tastes like real beef. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

had huge success with its new vegan sausage roll.

Waitrose, the UK supermarket group, says that almost 13 per cent of the British population now calls itself vegan or vegetarian, although many seem to take a lax view of what that means. "Half of all those who say they're vegetarian or vegan also eat meat 'at weekends', 'occasionally' or 'on special occasions', " Waitrose said in its most recent food and drink report.

Does this matter? Yes, to those whose priority is animal welfare.

But for health and environmental reasons, we should all be eating less meat.

Whether we are depends on where we live. Consumption of pork, poultry, beef and lamb "has plateaued and possibly even decreased in high-income countries, whereas it has risen dramatically in many middle-income countries, especially in China and East Asia", an article in the journal Science said last year.

A reduction in consumption of both plastics and meat are long-term campaigns.

They will both require government effort, international action, incentives and the provision of alternatives. Consumer enthusiasm is important but, as past campaigns have shown, it is seldom enough. FINANCIAL TIMES



The presidential election debates will give the incumbent Joko Widodo (above) a podium to highlight his achievements and may just be what he needs to reinvigorate the ground in his favour. The stakes are high for him and his challenger Prabowo Subianto as the national campaign enters its final phase. PHOTO: REUTERS

# Crunch time for Jokowi as election debates kick off



**Francis Chan**

Indonesia Bureau Chief

JAKARTA • The first presidential election debate in Indonesia today between the incumbent Joko Widodo and his challenger Prabowo Subianto takes place exactly three months before polls open on April 17.

The stakes are high for both men as the national campaign enters its final phase, while the pool of undecided voters shrinks by the day.

How well the candidates fare in the series of five public debates, introduced in 2004 when Indonesia first held direct elections, may determine which way these voters swing.

With Mr Prabowo and his running mate Sandiaga Uno gaining ground on Mr Joko, the debates have taken on an added prominence, but they also offer the President an opportunity to refocus attention on his strengths and achievements.

There is also an urgent need for Mr Joko to change the current narrative, particularly over his choice of senior ulama Ma'ruf Amin as his running mate – a decision that is fast turning out to be an awkward vulnerability in his re-election bid.

Polling results consistently show Mr Joko with a comfortable lead over Mr Prabowo, a retired general whom he first defeated for the presidency in 2014.

It is not hard to see why.

Mr Joko's personal likeability has helped him retain much of the grassroots support, while his push for more infrastructure and land distribution schemes for the rural poor has reinforced his image as a "people's president".

He also enjoys all the trappings of an incumbent, including access to a nationwide fund-raising and campaign machinery, and the ability to build an alliance of nine political parties, regional leaders, generals and tycoons, to back his re-election.

But despite these considerable advantages, Mr Joko is still facing a more uphill task than anticipated as he seeks a referendum on his presidency at the upcoming polls.

Disappointment over Indonesia's anaemic economic performance since he took office is

often cited as a major drag on his polling numbers.

The other is the perennial problem that had plagued the President's first campaign for office: His Muslim credentials.

Of the two, the question of whether Mr Joko is "Islamic enough" is perhaps the bigger headache, in part because his struggle to meet domestic economic growth targets can largely be attributed to global uncertainties.

Aspersions on the President's "Muslim cred" is somewhat unexpected, given his decision to pick Dr Ma'ruf as his vice-presidential candidate.

Wild accusations of him being a communist and half-Chinese are still dogging Mr Joko on social media during this campaign.

## BATTLE OF THE RUNNING MATES

Having Dr Ma'ruf – a respected senior cleric in a country with the world's largest Muslim population – on the President's joint ticket initially seemed like a smart move.

The hope was that as the former leader of the 80 million-strong Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Dr Ma'ruf would draw the support of Indonesia's largest Muslim organisation and with that, neutralise the threat from the Islamic far-right.

However, Dr Ma'ruf no longer looks such an inspired choice.

For one thing, younger Indonesians and those who hold moderate views on Islam are not taking to him. Many still blame the elderly cleric for the political downfall of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, the popular ex-governor of Jakarta who was jailed for insulting Islam in 2017.

They also remain unmoved by Dr Ma'ruf's public expression of regret for his testimony against Basuki, best known by his Chinese nickname Ahok, while his attempts to reach out online to liberals in a Christmas message were seen as contrived and politically motivated.

Several observers have also wondered how Dr Ma'ruf, who turns 76 in March, will connect with Indonesia's 80 million millennials, many of whom are set to vote for the first time in a presidential election.

To compound matters, Mr Prabowo chose 49-year-old billionaire Sandiaga Uno as his vice-presidential candidate. The contrast between Mr Sandiaga and Dr Ma'ruf could not have been more stark, particularly online, where the former, a youthful-looking, self-confessed endurance sports junkie, has a strong social media presence.

Recent survey results show Mr Sandiaga far ahead of Dr Ma'ruf in the vice-presidential race. Notably, Mr Sandiaga is favoured by women, young people and the highly educated – together they form a significant bloc within the group of 192.84 million eligible voters.

While it is understandable that Dr Ma'ruf may be hamstrung in appealing to the young and moderate, he has also failed to gain the support of the Muslim conservative groups he was expected to deliver, said S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies research fellow Alexander Arifianto.

These include Muhammadiyah, the second-largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia, as well as other Muslim groups affiliated with the National Movement to Support the Ulama Edicts, which are longstanding Prabowo supporters.

Dr Ma'ruf was also blamed by his own campaign team for the lack of increase in support for the President, popularly known as Jokowi, in at least three provinces, including the cleric's hometown Banten.

Internal polling numbers showed that the Jokowi-Ma'ruf pairing had 39 per cent of support in Banten against their rivals' 59 per cent. The Prabowo-Sandiaga ticket also outscored them by 54 per cent to 42 per cent in Riau, while observers believe the same is likely true in Jambi and the populous West Java province, another key election battleground and a Prabowo stronghold.

Dr Ma'ruf was not able to gain traction in those areas mainly due to his position with NU, a rival faction to Muhammadiyah. But Mr Arifianto noted that the cleric was also not winning over grassroots-level Muslims,

**The latest survey by pollsters from Indikator Politik Indonesia last month saw the Prabowo-Sandiaga ticket garnering 35 per cent in support – up nearly five percentage points from October.**

including those who are aligned with NU. "This can be seen even in Ma'ruf's native province Banten, where he is not well known in rural villages," he added.

So while Mr Joko had picked Dr Ma'ruf to defend his weak spot, it seems to have created a new problem instead. Perhaps Tempo magazine summed it up best when it said on its December cover that the President has an "Ulama Dilemma".

## FIGHT FOR SWING VOTERS

That the Jokowi-Ma'ruf joint ticket is still ahead is a reflection of the President's own popularity, rather than the "ulama effect".

A closer look at various survey findings show that even their lead is slowly but surely being chipped away by their rivals as the campaign kicks into a higher gear.

The latest survey by pollsters from Indikator Politik Indonesia last month saw the Prabowo-Sandiaga ticket garnering 35 per cent in support – up nearly five percentage points from October.

The Jokowi-Ma'ruf ticket was still ahead with almost 55 per cent support, but it registered only a 1.9 percentage-point bump.

"This means swing voters are now beginning to choose," said Indonesian Institute of Sciences political researcher Nostalgian Wahyudhi. Up to 20 per cent of the total voters are still undecided, according to estimates by some analysts.

As the race unfolds in the months ahead, the candidates can be expected to zero in and intensify their efforts on this group of swing voters. And much of this strategy will be played out on stage during the televised debates where all four candidates are expected to make their pitch to Indonesians.

So while Mr Joko cannot avoid the difficult questions over his failure to deliver on all his campaign promises, the debates will still give him a podium from which to highlight his achievements in areas such as fighting corruption, and the improved infrastructure and better access to healthcare and education.

As an incumbent with considerable goodwill among voters, Mr Joko would have the upper hand when addressing such issues compared to his unproven rivals. His taking to the stage to engage his challengers in a competition of ideas may just be what he needs to reinvigorate the ground in his favour.

tkchan@sph.com.sg

# Is China really cheating?

**Stephen Roach**

Repetition breeds reality. Such is the case with allegations the United States has levelled at China in their budding economic cold war.

Across the American political spectrum, it is now taken for granted that China forces US companies to transfer critical technology in order to do business on the mainland, engages in rampant hacking and theft of intellectual property (IP), and massively and unfairly subsidises its high-tech industries – all of which contribute to fears that the country poses an existential threat to America's prosperity.

Like many long-time observers of China, I have been getting more than my fair share of airtime over the past months. Typically, the interview starts with a false premise followed by a loaded question: "Everyone knows that China is stealing hundreds of billions of dollars a year in US intellectual property. Isn't it time for America to stand up to its greatest economic threat?"

But, what exactly does "everybody" really know?

This assertion is drawn from the findings of the IP Commission Report co-chaired by two renowned public servants, former director of National Intelligence Admiral Dennis Blair and former Utah governor Jon Huntsman Jr, now ambassador to Russia.

In 2017, the commission estimated that IP theft cost the US economy between US\$225 billion and US\$600 billion (S\$305 billion and S\$813 billion) annually, an exceptionally broad range. Stolen trade secrets are thought to account for 80 to 90 per cent of the total, the remainder being counterfeit and pirated hardware and software.

When it comes to stolen trade secrets, there's no hard data to support the estimates.

The IP Commission rests its case on a 2014 study by PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Center for Responsible Enterprise and Trade, which itself relies on dubious "proxy modelling" – in essence, coming up with statistical guesstimates using available data on nefarious activities such as narcotics trafficking, corruption, occupational fraud and illicit financial flows.

While these are problematic features of any nation, it takes a rather large leap of faith to convert this information into the 1 to 3 per cent of gross domestic product that the IP Commission claims is lost to theft of IP.

The commission's estimates of how much of this loss to attribute to China are even more dubious.

They come from the US Customs and Border Patrol, which reported US\$1.35 billion in seizures of counterfeit and pirated goods in 2015. Another model – constructed by researchers at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – was used to convert this to a US total. Then 87 per cent of that was attributed to China – 52 per cent from the mainland and 35 per cent from Hong Kong. With no direct tally available for pirated software, once again a "model" (from Business Software Alliance) was used to impute 61 per cent of that total to the Asia-Pacific.

Meanwhile, no attempt was made to quantify the Chinese share of stolen trade secrets which, as noted above, accounts for the bulk of the overall estimate of America's IP losses.

The bottom line: The only thing "everybody knows" about China's alleged IP theft from the US comes from flimsy evidence derived from highly dubious models.

An equally suspicious approach was used to support the case levelled by the US Trade Representative (USTR) in the so-called Section 301 report published last March and used to justify America's tariff war against China. The heart of the USTR's case is that companies are forced to transfer technology when they enter into mainland joint ventures (JV).

Within the JV structure, a voluntary contract between two parties, it's hardly shocking that US and Chinese partners share talent, strategies, operating systems, process designs and yes, production technologies, in their collective efforts to build a new business.

But, even the USTR confesses it has no hard evidence to prove that this sharing is forced – the essence of the allegation. Buried on page 19 of the 182-page USTR report is the admission that "transfer policies and practices have become more implicit, often carried out through oral instructions and 'behind closed doors'".

Here, following the highly questionable precedent of the IP Commission, the USTR also rests its case on proxy surveys conducted by the US-China Business Council, in which 19 per cent of respondents claim they've been forced to transfer technology to their Chinese partners. Curiously, in the council's latest survey (conducted last year), 99 per cent of respondents saw no deterioration in IP protection over the past year.

Bias even creeps into the evidence on cyber attacks presented by the USTR. While there have been reports of very recent cyber incursions by state-sponsored Chinese hackers, most of the allegations documented by the USTR predate a September 2015 cyber accord signed by Presidents Barack Obama and Xi Jinping.

Finally, while state-sponsored industrial policies (such as Made in China 2025) are alleged to be a unique and unfair effort by China to dominate leading-edge industries such as artificial intelligence, little mention is made of similar industrial policies long supported by Japan, Germany and even the US through its Pentagon-centric R&D programme.

Nor is there any effort to provide serious economic analysis of the outsize US-China bilateral trade imbalance – the political lightning rod in the trade battle – as but one piece of America's multilateral deficits with 102 nations that have long afflicted a savings-short US economy.

China is far from perfect and must be held accountable for verifiable economic transgressions. But America's case against China is based on anecdotes and shaky evidence.

As a trade war now morphs into a cold war, the current US administration would be wise to stop relying on such "alternative facts" to wage its battles. BLOOMBERG

• Stephen Roach, a faculty member at Yale University and former chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia, is the author of *Unbalanced: The Codependency Of America And China*.

# Britain is a nation in desperate need of a driver

After a historic Brexit vote, Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn are not providing the statesmanship needed to avoid a political and economic disaster

Jenni Russell

This week, as an anxious Britain prepared to witness Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit plan crashing to defeat, Nicholas Soames, Winston Churchill's grandson, tweeted one of his grandfather's solemn warnings from the 1930s.

Mr Soames, a Conservative politician, repeated lines from a poem that his grandfather had quoted to express his despair at Britain's political paralysis in the face of the Nazi threat:

"Who is in charge of the clattering train? The axles creak, and the couplings strain. For the pace is hot and the points are near, and Sleep had hated the driver's ear, and signals flash through the night in vain. Who is in charge of the clattering train?"

Nobody knows.

With Mrs May's Cabinet, the country, political parties and Parliament all hopelessly split over how or whether to carry out Brexit, Britain's political universe is imploding and so are its political norms.

At any other time, a prime minister who lost her government's flagship policy would be expected to resign. On Tuesday, Mrs May's Brexit plan was defeated by a vote of 432-202.

Immediately afterwards, Mr Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the opposition Labour Party, called a vote of no-confidence. Nobody expects Mrs May to leave office this week.

Before the vote, she had told her Cabinet that no matter how much she lost by, she intended to stay on and steer a form of Brexit through. She is hoping to keep her hands on



It remains to be seen whether British Prime Minister Theresa May and leader of the opposition Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn can suspend their instinctive hostility to lead the country through the Brexit crisis. PHOTOS: EPA-EFE, REUTERS

the wheel, even though most of her passengers are rebelling against her destination.

But now that the vote is over, all of the plots for and against her, and for and against each possible permutation of Brexit, will be unleashed.

Every faction in each of the two main parties will be fighting and scheming for its preferred result, from a no-deal Brexit to a softer departure that leaves Britain closer to the European Union to abandoning the idea of leaving altogether.

Predicting who will win is impossible because none of these factions has a majority and no one knows how or whether they will form alliances.

Politicians and journalists are

frantically trying to game the next few weeks. Every outcome is unlikely and most seem utterly implausible, yet everything – from another indecisive election to a national unity government – is being suggested.

I recently asked three senior Conservative politicians at the heart of these machinations which future Britain would be facing in 10 weeks, when the Brexit clock runs out.

"God alone knows," said one Cabinet minister, a keen Brexiteer. "No one knows," said the second, a reluctant Brexit backer. "Haven't a frigging clue," said one of the key campaigners for a second referendum.

Everyone is horribly – or jubilantly – aware that if within the

next few weeks Parliament cannot agree on Mrs May's deal, or on any other deal, or on throwing the issue back to the country in a referendum, then Britain will tumble out of the European Union at the end of March, smashing its economy and its relationships with its closest trading partners.

With the ruling Conservatives so divided, Mr Corbyn's Labour is in a potentially powerful position. If it threw its votes behind the Tories backing Mrs May's agreement, or supported a second referendum, or decided to back a softer Brexit that retained much closer links with Europe – "Norway Plus", as it's known – those proposals would likely pass.

But so far, the party has refused to commit itself to any such solutions

because it, too, is split between those who want to leave the European Union and those who want to remain.

So far it has suited Mr Corbyn, a long-time Eurosceptic, to stay on the fence, loftily opposing all of the Tories' proposals and declaring that if only Labour were in power, it could magically achieve a better Brexit deal.

He's reluctant to back anything that the Tories propose because he calculates that doing so will implicate him in Brexit's inevitable economic damage. He doesn't want a second referendum because he doesn't know which side to back. This comfortable evasion cannot be sustained after Mrs May's crushing defeat on Tuesday.

Labour will have to pick sides and live with the consequences.

Members of Parliament and leaders in all parties will be faced with the starker of choices: Britain's future will be decided within the next month. Neither party has enough votes to make that choice on its own.

The question now is whether the leadership on both sides has the will, imagination or character to reach out to the other and avoid a no-deal disaster.

There's nothing in their careers to suggest that is so.

After her defeat, Mrs May announced that she wanted to talk with the opposition to discover what compromise Members of Parliament were prepared to support.

An enraged Mr Corbyn retorted that over the previous two years she had closed down every attempt at dialogue, and her only priority had been the Conservative Party.

It is Britain's misfortune that at this moment, when cooperation and statesmanship are needed to prevent political and economic disaster, both the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition are known for being cautious, obstinate, unimaginative, tribal and charmless.

That is why the wilder suggestion now is that moderate Labour and Tory rebels may step forward and declare themselves a new parliamentary grouping, prepared to lead the country in a government of national unity away from the cliff's edge.

It feels preposterous – but so does almost everything else.

Can Mrs May and Mr Corbyn suspend their instinctive hostility? Can a fleet of courageous men and women in Parliament step forward if not? Britain is in desperate need of a driver who can seize control of the clattering train. NYTIMES

• Jenni Russell is a columnist for The Times of London

## What Trump's fast-food feast and Gillette's 'woke' razor blades have in common

Sonny Bunch

There's something sublime about the image, a quality that pushes it past absurdity, through camp and into the realm of true art.

The President of the United States, arms out and hands open, grinning, directly under a portrait of his greatest predecessor, Abraham Lincoln. Candelabras on each side are lit to full brightness, welcoming us, the viewer, into an American fast-food feast of epic proportions.

Burgers as far as the camera lens can capture. Side salads piled high on a serving platter. Filet-O-Fish sandwiches for those who aren't interested in Quarter Pounders. Every sauce the heart could desire for McNuggets that were just out of sight. A whole table of pizza elsewhere in the room.

Wendy's, McDonald's, Burger King, Domino's: Justice League and the Avengers have nothing on this.

The cornucopia's (estimated) tab of US\$3,000 (S\$4,060), assembled to honour national football champions Clemson Tigers was picked up by US President Donald Trump himself. The shutdown and all that, you see. It is, on every level, a master political stroke.

Mr Trump comes off looking like a benevolent billionaire, providing succour for his guests on his own dime. He plays right to his populist strengths, assembling a melange of foods that every American is familiar with and most Americans have eaten, and probably recently.

He has also set a perfect trap for his critics, whose sneering at the feast will come off as elitist, whose taunts will come off as slights to the harried mum or dad who picked up a Big Mac and two Happy Meals on the way home from work.

Here is an easy chance to play up the "us-against-them" angle that has formed the heart of his appeal, the whole reason for his presidency. If you point out that it's



The writer says that by picking up the tab for the fast-food feast assembled to honour national football champions Clemson Tigers, US President Donald Trump comes off looking like a benevolent billionaire, providing succour for his guests on his own dime. PHOTO: NYTIMES

inappropriate for an official White House dinner, even one for college kids, to consist of fast food, you're a snob, you don't get it, you're out of touch, you hate the working man.

The flip side of this coin is "woke" Gillette. The venerable razor-blade manufacturer has decided that the

toxicity of masculinity is too much for it to bear. In a rousing advertisement designed to show just how progressive the act of removing stubble from one's chin can be, the brand debuted a new advertising campaign with an almost-two-minute video showing just how far men still have to go. Catcalling? Teasing? Bullying?

Roughhousing in the backyard? The phrase "boys will be boys"? To the ash heap of history, all of you. This is a new day, one in which our clean-shaven menfolk will take to the streets and right historical wrongs, tamp down their desire to mansplain, struggle against the barbarian within that demands

physical satisfaction when a slight is experienced.

Like Mr Trump's play to his base, Woke Gillette's play to its base – or, I suppose, what it hopes to claim as its base: the ethical consumer signalling its virtue – is nominally beyond reproach. Oh, you're in favour of bullying?

Mr Trump has set a perfect trap for his critics, whose sneering at the feast will come off as elitist, whose taunts will come off as slights to the harried mum or dad who picked up a Big Mac and two Happy Meals on the way home from work.

Do you even know the suicide statistics in this country? You don't support #MeToo? How dare you back sexual harassment by mocking this effort to raise awareness?

Of course, both the Fast-food Feast and Woke Gillette are explicitly designed to inspire mockery and, therefore, implicitly designed to encourage the us-versus-them dichotomy that defines modern American life.

One of my favourite moments in FX Networks' long-running sitcom It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia comes when one of the characters, upon hearing of the gang's latest scheme, asks: "Who versus? Who are we doing it versus?"

The idea that something could be undertaken without having a "mark" to target or an "angle" to pursue baffles the show's awful protagonists. "Whose face are we shoving this in?" is always the question.

Perhaps I have grown cynical in my middle age. But I can't help wondering the same thing whenever I see an ostentatious display so obviously designed to aggravate some segment of the population while nakedly appealing to those on the other side of the political spectrum. In the case of Mr Trump and Gillette, the answer to "Who versus?" seems clear.

WASHINGTON POST

# BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.  
**High** 32 deg C **Low** 24 deg C  
 24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 38 to 50 (Good)



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Leaving his rival bikers in the dust

Chilean biker Jose Ignacio Florimo Cornejo defied gravity as he sped up a sand dune during the eighth stage of the Dakar Rally on Tuesday.

The segment in the 10-stage event took place between San Juan de Marcona and Pisco, Peru.

The Dakar Rally, considered one of the world's toughest motor sport events, sees contestants in various vehicle categories - from motorcycles to trucks - go through an endurance race across tough terrain and extreme weather. Racers also

face a unique challenge: They must be careful not to damage their vehicle as technical crews are not allowed on the race.

This year's rally, which kicked off last Monday in Lima, ends today in the Peruvian capital.

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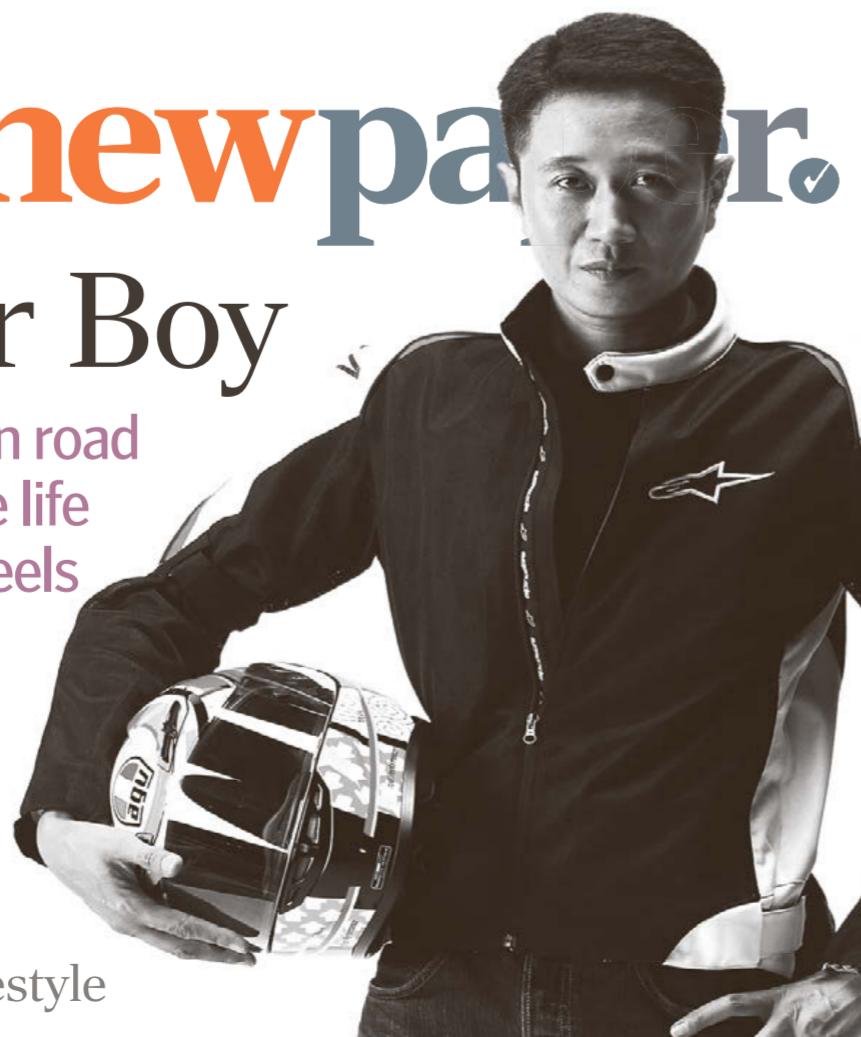
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# BUSINESS

# \$380m

RESERVE PRICE OF SULTAN PLAZA,  
WHICH IS UP FOR SALE EN BLOC C2

## 72%

Percentage of employees who worked in firms that offered at least one formal flexible work arrangement – up from 70 per cent in 2017.

## 87%

Percentage of employees who were offered at least one ad hoc, or impromptu, arrangement – up from 81 per cent in 2017.

## 53%

The share of firms offering at least one type of formal flexi-work arrangement, a slight increase from 50 per cent in 2017.

## Higher share of workers in firms offering flexi-work

**Having flexible arrangements had most impact on staff retention, says MOM report**

**Joanna Seow**  
Manpower Correspondent

The share of workers here whose companies provide formal flexible work arrangements continues to grow, and employers are offering more types of such perks.

Last year, 72 per cent of employees worked in firms with at least one such arrangement, such as part-time work, flexible hours or teleworking, up from 70 per cent in 2017.

Also, more were offered at least one ad hoc, or impromptu, arrangement: The figure rose to 87 per cent last year, from 81 per cent in 2017, according to the latest Conditions of Employment report released by the Ministry of Manpower yesterday.

Just over half, or 53 per cent, of firms offered at least one type of formal flexi-work arrangement, up from 50 per cent in 2017.

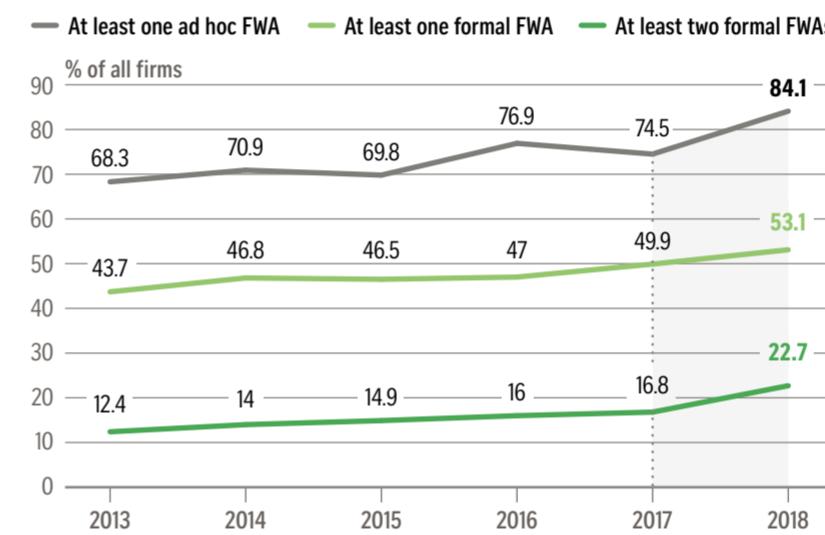
Offering these arrangements makes business sense as employees are more likely to stay with a company with such options, especially as the new generation of workers values flexibility a lot more, said Minister of State for Manpower Zaqy Mohamad, who was sharing the findings at a human resources (HR) industry event.

"Employees, likewise, when offered flexible work arrangements, see it as a sign that they are valued by the company and that the company is willing to accommodate employees' responsibilities outside of work," he added.

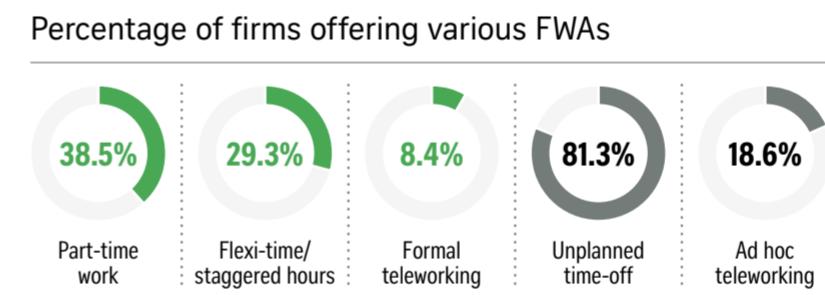


About 48 per cent of full-time employees were given at least 15 days of paid annual leave last year.  
ST FILE PHOTO

### More firms with flexi-work arrangements (FWAs)



### Common flexi-work arrangements



Source: MINISTRY OF MANPOWER STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Employees also feel that the company trusts them to get the work done even though they are not sitting at their desks, he said.

The provision of flexible arrangements had the greatest impact on staff retention among various workplace practices, the report said.

The biennial report, which cov-

ered some 1.3 million workers and 3,700 firms, said increases in annual leave entitlement and reductions in the number of work days per week led to the next biggest decreases in resignation rates.

Compared with the previous report in 2016, more full-time employees – about 48 per cent – were

given at least 15 days of paid annual leave last year, up from about 45 per cent.

The prevalence of flexi-work arrangements in Singapore is still lower than in countries like Japan and South Korea, noted Institute for Human Resource Professionals chief executive Mayank Parekh.

One reason could be that many smaller firms choose not to formalise their flexible arrangements in order to retain management control and flexibility.

Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASME) vice-president Chew Lee Ching said small and medium-sized businesses recognise in principle that flexi-work arrangements can be a way to retain staff amid the labour crunch, but most do not have spare manpower capacity to offer them.

It may also be harder for firms to implement such arrangements in jobs where teams are needed for operations, such as on the factory floor or in front-line service, said Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI) president Erman Tan. "But with good technology and smart deployment, they can start to reduce their reliance on manpower."

Highlighting successful case studies in various industries could help change employers' mindsets, he added.

Besides educating employers, it may be necessary to educate workers on flexible schemes as well.

Ms Charlotte Thng, Standard Chartered Bank's head of HR for Singapore, said staff were worried about how supervisors would perceive their productivity when the bank first introduced flexi-work arrangements in 2011.

"When they saw their performance ratings were still good, they got over their concerns," she said, adding that the bank sent out e-mail broadcasts, walked supervisors through the schemes, and now holds roadshows to explain the schemes to employees.

The take-up rate has tripled in the last three years, and staff on flexible arrangements now number in the hundreds out of the bank's 9,000-strong workforce here, she said.

This has contributed to a 4 per cent drop in the voluntary attrition rate over the last three years. "Employees get a sense of trust, space and flexibility, while supervisors get the work as agreed on in the performance objectives," Ms Thng added.

Mr Zaqy, who was speaking at the SHRI Outlook event at One Marina Boulevard, also took part in a dialogue with some 200 HR professionals and business leaders. They discussed topics including remaining open to foreign talent, retaining younger workers and managing the rising cost of medical benefits as workers age.

Also at the event, SHRI and ASME signed an agreement to set up a centre to provide practical support to bosses of smaller firms who want to improve their HR practices. They aim to open the SHRI SME Human Capital Centre next year.

joseow@sph.com.sg

## Grab launches free medical leave insurance for drivers

**Aw Cheng Wei**

Ride-hailing platform Grab yesterday launched a free medical leave insurance scheme for drivers – but they must hit a minimum level of earnings.

Mr Andrew Chan, Grab Singapore's transport head, said the company has rolled out the scheme to "push the boundaries in offering even more comprehensive support and benefits" for private-hire drivers on its platform.

"Drivers' earnings are something we recognise as core to their livelihoods and families," he added.

Currently, Grab offers a range of benefits, from fuel discounts to scholarships and bursaries for drivers' children.

The new scheme comes on the back of recommendations by a tripartite work group on self-employed persons that the Government accepted in February last year.

It will be on top of Grab's existing free personal accident insurance provided for all drivers and passengers on its platform. And it covers "the majority of Grab driver-partners for free", a Grab spokesman said, without providing specific figures on its fleet size.

Payouts are determined by how often private-hire drivers use Grab, their earnings and the duration of their medical or hospitalisation leave. To qualify for the coverage,

the drivers have to have earned about \$2,000 in fares per month.

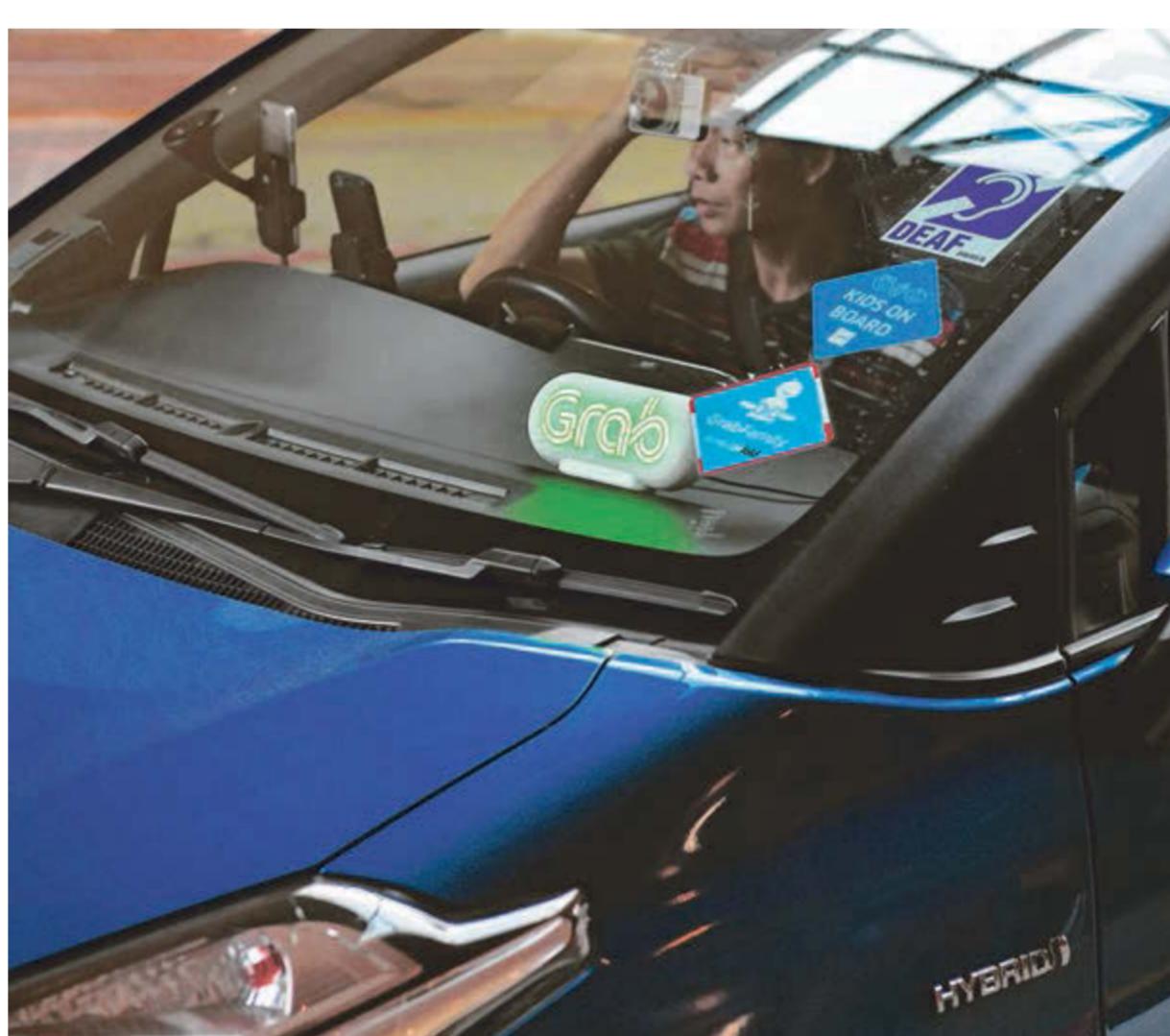
The scheme covers medical leave from the sixth day onwards, to a maximum of 14 days, and hospitalisation leave from the second day onwards, up to 60 days.

Drivers will be reimbursed between 50 and 85 per cent of their average daily earnings, within a range between \$30 and \$200. Calculations are done based on their earnings from Grab for the past 90 days before they fell sick or got injured.

According to Grab's website, the payout will take about 10 days after Chubb Insurance receives the claim forms, if no additional documents are required. Drivers who are not covered can sign up for another insurance scheme that the company will launch soon, the Grab spokesman said.

Rent, which costs more than \$100 a day, is his primary worry. Mr Lim, 28, who drives a Mercedes E-class for Grab's higher-end service, said: "When I'm sick, I'm concerned if my rental can be paid or not, and not about my earnings for that day."

A spokesman for competitor Gojek Singapore said the company is



Grab's new scheme covers medical leave from the sixth day onwards, to a maximum of 14 days, and hospitalisation leave from the second day onwards, up to 60 days. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

"close to finalising partnerships with a number of... companies – including insurance and healthcare providers – to offer a comprehensive suite of welfare benefits for all of our driver-partners". More details will be out soon, he added.

A Deliveroo spokesman said its riders currently have accident insurance, which the food delivery service rolled out in May last year.

"Deliveroo would like to go further... and offer riders more benefits, but runs the risk of courts reclassifying riders' employment status, which could reduce their ability to work flexibly," he added.

"Deliveroo is campaigning for a change in the law so that riders can have both flexibility and security."

A Foodpanda spokesman said its fleet is made up of independent contractors who have the choice to sign up for insurance packages at preferential rates from the company's insurance partners.

"Rider safety is a very important topic for Foodpanda," he added.

Mr Ang Hin Kee, executive adviser at the National Private Hire Vehicles Association, called Grab's move "a step in the right direction". The association has been in "close consultation with Grab", he added.

"We hope more can be done so that eventually, all drivers can be protected with the (prolonged medical leave) insurance."

awcw@sph.com.sg

## Salary not main driver of job satisfaction for S'pore workers: Report

**Goh Yan Han**

Salary is not the biggest driver of satisfaction among Singapore employees, according to a study by data collection platform Qualtrics, with more than 500 participants here.

This result is part of a larger survey of more than 6,000 participants globally, including in countries such as Australia and the United States.

The survey was done in a multiple-choice format with a five-point

scale for participants to choose from, ranging from "always" to "never", or "extremely satisfied" to "extremely dissatisfied".

The report released yesterday sought to provide details of the daily experience of Singapore's workers, and how key engagement metrics such as work-life balance, job satisfaction, motivation at work, attrition and retention vary across the working population.

The findings suggested that the main drivers for job satisfaction locally were confidence in the com-

pany's senior leadership team, and a helpful manager in resolving work-related issues.

A unique factor for workers in Singapore, in comparison with those in the other countries, was that receiving sufficient training to perform their jobs effectively was also a key factor behind enhanced job satisfaction, as well as increased desire to go to work and higher staff retention rates. This suggests that employees appreciate it when employers invest in them, said the report.

The findings also showed that

while Singapore workers had the lowest levels of job satisfaction compared with those in other countries, they had the lowest levels of work-related stress.

Just under half of those surveyed here were satisfied with their current jobs, below the global average of 62 per cent.

When it came to stress, 22 per cent said they felt stressed or overwhelmed "always" or "most of the time".

Workers in Australia, the US and the United Kingdom were found to

be the most stressed, at 29 per cent.

Work-life balance was found to be linked to job loyalty. Workers happy with their work-life balance, as well as those who said their companies were extremely supportive of it, were more likely to indicate that they would stay in their jobs.

Singapore workers may be seeing an improvement to their work-life balance in future.

More employers are offering formal flexible work arrangements, according to the latest Conditions of Employment report released by the

Ministry of Manpower (MOM) yesterday.

Last year, 72 per cent of employees worked in companies that offered at least one such arrangement, such as part-time work, flexible hours or teleworking, up from 70 per cent in 2017.

Flexibility in working arrangements had the greatest impact on staff retention, said the MOM report, corroborating the findings of the Qualtrics study.

gyanhan@sph.com.sg

## Sultan Plaza up for sale en bloc at \$380m

Agent says it has received interest from developers even before launch, given the choice location

The owners of the Sultan Plaza commercial building along Jalan Sultan have launched a public tender for a collective sale with a reserve price of \$380 million.

The 99-year leasehold development, which was built in the 1970s, sits on 52,471 sq ft of prime land that is zoned for commercial use.

The maximum permissible gross floor area can be redeveloped to 283,803 sq ft, referenced against the 5.3 gross plot ratio of neighbouring City Gate and subject to regulatory approval.

Based on that estimate, the reserve price represents a land rate of about \$1,860 per sq ft per plot ratio, inclusive of development charge and differential premium payable.

Sultan Plaza comprises 244 units. It sits between Beach Road and North Bridge Road, near the Kampong Glam conservation enclave.

There are three MRT stations across three different lines within 750m of the plot - Nicoll Highway station on the Circle Line, Lavender station on the East West Line, and Bugis station on the Downtown and East West Lines.

"We have already received strong interest from local and overseas developers even prior to our tender launch, given Sultan Plaza's choice location," said Mr Jeremy Chiu, director of investment sales at ERA Realty Network, the agent for the sale.

"This site presents a lot of opportunities for the prospective buyer as it is a beautiful canvas where a piece of Singapore's history can be redesigned with creative architectural concepts that can contribute to Singapore's future development stories," he said.

"Future expansion into the neighbouring site is also conceivable,



Built in the 1970s, Sultan Plaza sits on 52,471 sq ft of prime land zoned for commercial use. It lies between Beach Road and North Bridge Road, near the Kampong Glam conservation enclave, with three MRT stations across three lines within 750m of the plot. Also close by are Duo Residences and South Beach, as well as the iconic Golden Mile Complex. PHOTO: ERA

### Newton Lodge put up for collective sale at \$44m

Owners of Newton Lodge, a 16-unit apartment block in Newton Road, have put their freehold 21,409 square foot site up for tender at a minimum price of \$44 million.

This translates to a land rate of \$1,468 per sq ft per plot ratio (psf ppr) at a 1.4 gross plot ratio, said the property's sole marketing agent JLL.

Factoring in an additional 8 per cent bonus gross floor area for balconies and communal areas, the land rate drops to about \$1,359 psf ppr. Development charges are not payable for the site's redevelopment.

The property is some 400m from Novena MRT station and the Novena commercial cluster.

which makes it attractive for developers who want to create an architectural masterpiece in this precinct."

The tender will close at noon on March 28.



The 16-unit Newton Lodge is near the Novena commercial cluster. JLL noted that developments are under way in the area to transform it into Singapore's largest healthcare hub, Health City Novena, by 2030. PHOTO: JLL

Major developments are under way in the Novena area to transform it into Singapore's largest

healthcare hub, Health City Novena, by 2030, JLL noted.

Earmarked for residential use

under the Urban Redevelopment Authority's 2014 Master Plan, the site may be redeveloped into a low-rise apartment project, serviced residence or custom-built co-living development, said JLL.

If approved for serviced apartments, Newton Lodge could potentially house around 50 to 60 rooms.

"Purchasers who wish to develop an entire building for co-living spaces or short-term accommodation should find Newton Lodge's central location, project size and price quantum attractive," said Mr Karamjit Singh, a senior consultant at JLL.

"Not only would a boutique-size project be more manageable, a smaller community of like-minded residents may also result in more meaningful social engagements."

The tender for Newton Lodge closes on Feb 26 at 2.30pm.

main building is conserved. There are about 49 years left on Golden Mile's lease.

Edmund Tie & Company is the agent for Golden Mile.

## Good progress on trade deal with EAEU: Tharman

Singapore, Russia and their partners in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are making good progress on concluding the EAEU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the middle of the year, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said on Tuesday.

Mr Tharman was in Russia's capital, Moscow, for meetings on bilateral economic initiatives as well as on the trade pact, and posted the update on his Twitter account.

The Prime Minister's Office said in a statement that Mr Tharman met First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anton Siluanov, Deputy Prime Minister Maxim Aki-

mov and Minister of Economic Development Maxim Oreshkin.

He also spoke at the 10th Gaidar Forum convened by the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, where he was in a panel discussion with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and officials from several European countries on national strategies to enable the positives of globalisation to outweigh the negatives.

Russia is among five member states of the EAEU, which also includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The economic bloc represents a market of



over 180 million people with a combined gross domestic product of US\$1.8 trillion (\$2.4 trillion).

The first round of negotiations for the EAEU-Singapore FTA was in

August 2017, and five more rounds have been held since.

"The EAEU represents a large, relatively untapped market for Singapore businesses," a spokesman for

Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) said yesterday.

"Given Singapore's economic profile and lack of natural resources, it is important for Singapore to re-

main plugged into the global supply chain. This would enable our companies to tap the opportunities beyond our limited borders, and enhance Singapore's value proposition to potential investors," the spokesman added.

"The EAEU-Singapore FTA would function as a catalyst for greater business linkages between our countries, creating diverse opportunities for trade and investment beyond Singapore's traditional markets, and enabling our businesses to operate seamlessly across the various countries."

When concluded and upon entry into force, the FTA will improve access of Singapore's goods and services trade with EAEU members via lower tariffs and lifting of barriers.

It will also protect Singapore investments and intellectual property in the EAEU market, promote electronic commerce and save costs for Singapore companies by streamlining customs processes, and enable closer collaboration between Singapore and the EAEU in competition enforcement, customs cooperation and trade facilitation, the MTI spokesman said.



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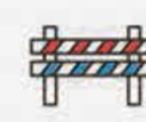
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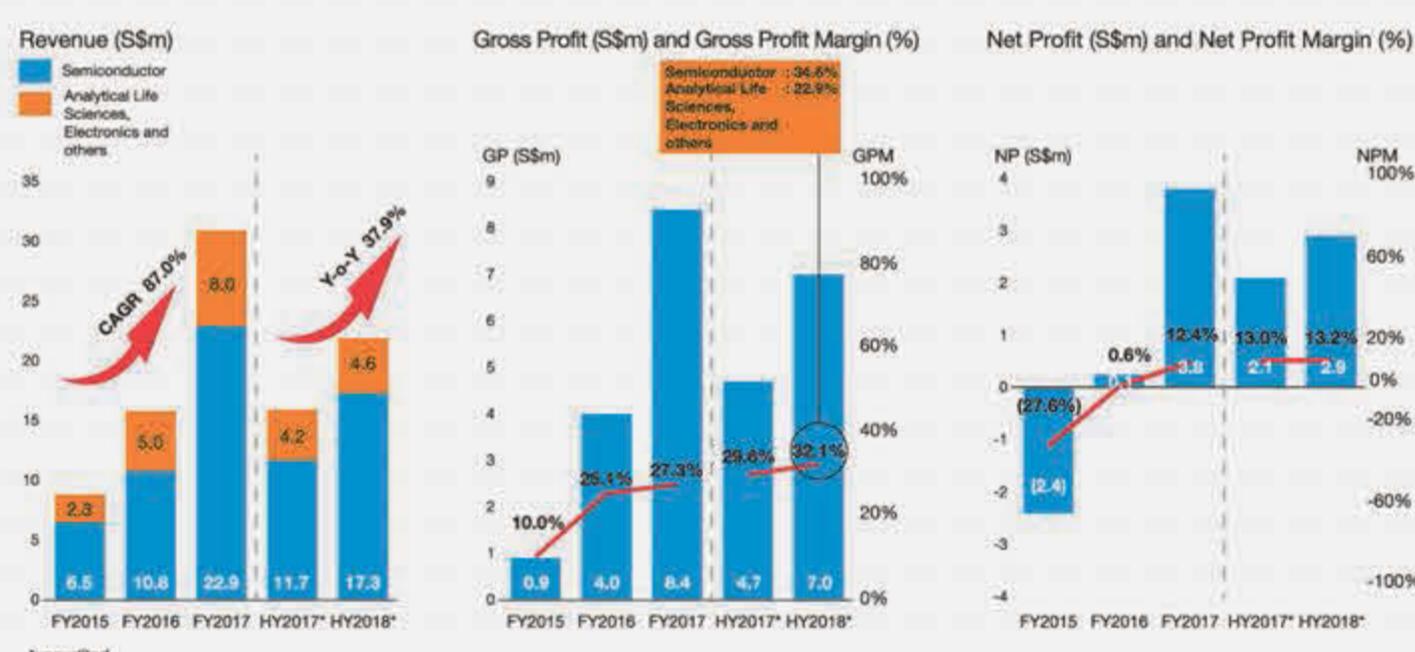
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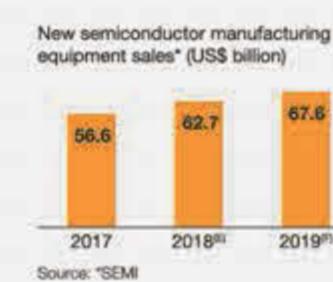


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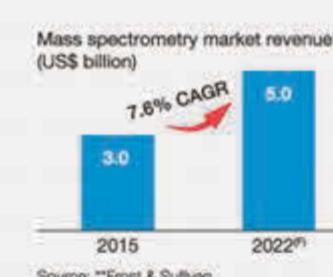
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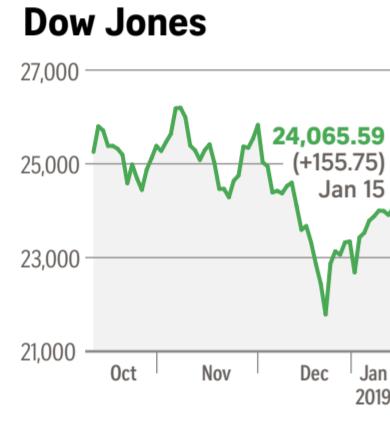
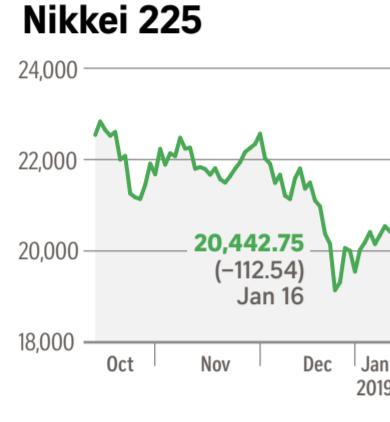
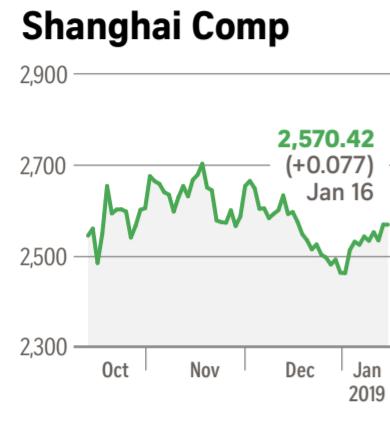


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Capitalised terms used herein, shall unless otherwise defined, have the same meanings ascribed to them in the Offer Document (as defined herein).

The offer document (the "Offer Document") relating to the offering of ordinary shares ("Shares") in the capital of Grand Venture Technology Limited (the "Company") has been registered on 15 January 2019 by the Singapore Exchange Securities Trading Limited (the "SGX-ST"), acting as agent on behalf of the Monetary Authority of Singapore. A printed copy of the Offer Document and the Application Forms relating to the Invitation will be available for collection, subject to availability, during normal office hours from the office of CGS-CIMB Securities (Singapore) Pte. Ltd. at CGS-CIMB Securities Investment Centre, 50 Raffles Place, #01-01, Singapore Land Tower, Singapore 048623. An electronic copy of the Offer Document is also available on the SGX-ST website at <http://www.agx.com>. Anyone wishing to acquire the Shares in connection with the Invitation will need to make an application in the manner set out in the Offer Document.

This advertisement or publication has not been reviewed by the Monetary Authority of Singapore or the SGX-ST.



## BullsAndBears

# STI stages late rally on day of uncertainty

Asian markets end mixed despite Chinese govt's boost to financial system

Leila Lai

Uncertainty reigned supreme in major global economies yesterday, after the United Kingdom Parliament voted down the latest Brexit deal and the partial US government shutdown entered its 25th day.

The Chinese government's largest one-day injection of liquidity into China's financial system might have been a strong catalyst on a quiet day, but instead struggled to cut through the noise.

Subsequently, Asian markets ended the day mixed.

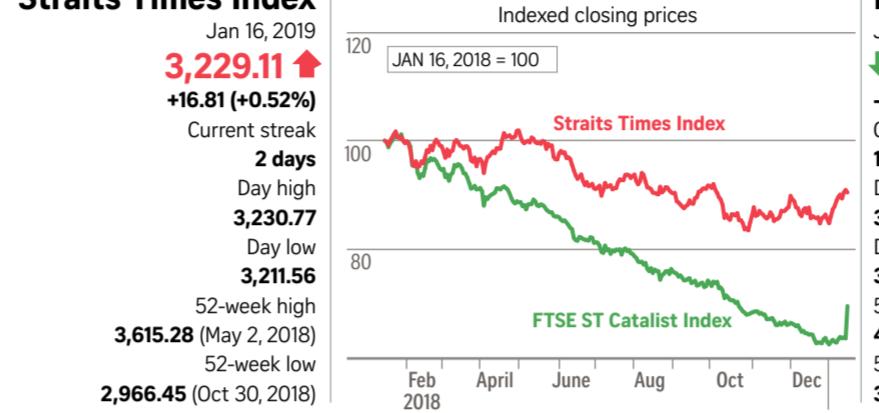
The Straits Times Index put up a generally uninspiring performance, peaking early at 3,230.77 before drifting downwards. However, it staged a late rally to finish near the day's high, up 16.81 points, or 0.52 per cent, at 3,229.11.

Turnover on the bourse was 1.12 billion securities worth \$1 billion, compared with 1.6 billion securities worth \$1.17 billion on Tuesday. Advancers outnumbered decliners 216 to 174.

Oil and gas counters Ezion Holdings and Rex International Holding led active trading with volumes of 40.5 million and 31.4 million shares respectively.

Oil prices rose about 3 per cent on Tuesday, buoyed in part by the Chinese government's fiscal stimulus

## Straits Times Index



## FTSE ST Catalist Index



to stabilise the country's slowing economy. Ezion added 0.1 cent, or 2.04 per cent, to close at five cents, and Rex International, up 0.2 cent, or 2.7 per cent, to 7.6 cents.

Other active stocks included ThaiBev, which gained for a ninth

straight day. About 28.7 million shares of the spirit maker changed hands, ending 1.5 cents, or 2.11 per cent, higher at 72.5 cents.

Shares of casino operator Genting Singapore gained one cent, or 0.94 per cent, to \$1.08, with volume at

## 22.4 million.

RHB Research said yesterday it maintains its "buy" call on the counter, given its potential expansion into Japan and upcoming reinvestment in Resorts World Sentosa.

RHB said Genting had a good chance of winning a Japan casino licence with its "track record as an integrated resorts casino operator in Singapore that adheres to stringent regulatory requirements".

AEM Holdings saw 14.7 million shares traded and closed four cents, or 4.44 per cent, up at 94 cents. The semiconductor equipment maker said one of its testing products had been approved to certify cabling systems from leading providers.

Investors should expect volatility and uncertainty in the coming days, market watchers say. The US government shutdown shows no signs of ending, and could force the US economy into a contraction.

leilal@sph.com.sg

China central bank injects record sum to boost economy

SHANGHAI • China's central bank yesterday made its biggest daily net cash injection via reverse repo operations on record, more evidence that the authorities are shifting to policy easing to counter a slowdown.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) said the injection was to maintain "reasonably ample" liquidity in the banking system. It attributed the generous liquidity support to the current peak period for tax payments, adding that "the banking system's overall liquidity is falling rapidly".

In open market operations, the PBOC injected 350 billion yuan (\$570 billion) through seven-day reverse bond repurchase agreements and 220 billion yuan through 28-day reverse repos.

On a net basis, the PBOC injected 560 billion yuan for the day, as 10 billion yuan reverse repos were set to mature yesterday.

Last month's "abysmal" trade data and manufacturing contraction have "translated to a consensus by the authorities that the economy needs more decided support and today's large injection reflects that", said Ms Trinh Nguyen, a senior economist for emerging Asia at Natixis in Hong Kong. "The news is clear – the economy needs help."

Head of fixed income research at Citic Securities in Beijing Ming Ming said the fund injection was to counter seasonal factors, including tax payments and rising cash demand for the Chinese New Year holiday early next month.

REUTERS

## Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS %	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	274	+1	22298	5.8	13
196	161	CapitaCom Trust	183	unch	19298	4.7	13
388	299	CapitaLand	333	+2	9680	3.6	0.7
238	195	CapitaLand Trust	239	unch	2555	4.8	11
1360	196	CityDev	885	+3	1443	2	0.8
251	213	ComforDelGro	213	-1	9960	4.9	14
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2517	+15	3980	5.7	14
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US975	+19	972	2.2	17
141	855	Genting Sing	108	+1	22435	3.2	17
39	223	Golden Agri-Res.	742	unch	14027	3	0.7
42	588	HII Trust USD	US25.5	unch	4424	10.1	0.7
744	5580	HongkongLand USD	US695	+2	1497	2.9	0.3
6974	5580	JMH USD	US685	-75	241	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	JSB USD	US3677	+17	199	0.9	0.4
4105	2766	Jardine C&C	3699	+40	718	3.1	18
892	567	Kepel Corp	624	+5	1983	3.5	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	117	+9	3895	3.1	13
585	455	SATS	100	-1	10	3.7	104
590	572	SOGO	742	+12	3466	4	84
1184	914	SIA	976	+6	1102	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	254	+2	3952	5.1	12
370	319	ST Engineering	364	+3	4305	4.1	53
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	268	+3	2519	1.9	0.7
365	283	Singtel	306	+3	14653	6.7	17
94	579	StarHub	72.5cd	+15	28699	0.9	36
3037	2380	StarB	2598	-	206	3.8	28
935	591	UOB	665	+4	1227	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1530	-5	1234	3.9	10
331	297	Wilmar Int'l	325	unch	4418	3.1	0.9
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	129	-1	22511	3.5	0.9

## FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS %	P/BV
286	195	Ascendas Reit	274	+1	22298	5.8	13
196	161	CapitaCom Trust	183	unch	19298	4.7	13
388	299	CapitaLand	333	+2	9680	3.6	0.7
238	195	CapitaLand Trust	239	unch	2555	4.8	11
1360	196	CityDev	885	+3	1443	2	0.8
251	213	ComforDelGro	213	-1	9960	4.9	18
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2517	+15	3980	5.7	14
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US975	+19	972	2.2	22
78	59	Far East H Trust	625	unch	715	0.7	0.7
197	150	First Resources	166	-4	1574	4.1	22
236	211	Frasers Cpt Tr	227	+3	432	5.3	11
117	101	Frasers LCI Tr	106	unch	3996	6.5	11
141	855	Genting Sing	108	+1	22435	3.2	17
39	225	Golden Agri-Res.	27	unch	14027	3	0.7
234	167	GuocoLand Ltd	181	unch	173	3.9	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US25.5	unch	4424	10.3	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US695	+2	1487	2.9	0.3
6974	5580	JMH USD	US685	-75	241	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	JSB USD	US3677	+17	199	0.9	0.4
4105	2766	Jardine C&C	3699	+40	718	3.1	18
59	445	Kep Infr Tr	515	+0.5	5858	7.2	18
892	567	Kepel Corp	624	+5	1983	3.5	1
133	108	Kepel Reit	118	+1	7032	4.8	0.8
215	151	M1	208	+1	1710	5.5	3.9
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US189	+1	91	1.6	14
172	152	Mapletree Com Tr	171	unch	7698	5.3	0.9
213	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	197	unch	2915	6	13
138	118	Mapletree Log Tr	134	-2	9423	5.7	12
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	118	unch	6616	6.3	0.9
83.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr	77.5	+0.5	1668	-	1
14							



# OBITUARIES

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2 Corinthians 5:1 'For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.'



## Ruth Anne Carroll

Age: 97

Passed away peacefully on 16 January 2019  
after a long and happy life.

She will be dearly missed and fondly remembered by her loved ones.

**Husband:**  
Percival Carroll (*deceased*);

**Children:**  
Patrick (*deceased*);  
Cheryl & Husband Gerry de Silva;  
Rodney & Wife Bernie Pereira;  
Vernon & Wife Suwonnee Neamho;

**Grandchildren:**  
Amanda & Husband Eric;  
Bryan; Jason; Shane & Wife Diane;

**Great Grandchildren:**  
Scarlett and Mia Zendaya

**Pet dog:**  
Khanom

Thanks to Dedicated care givers: Imee and Aurora;  
And Nurses: Shanti, Nor Fazira, Dhaivanai.  
Siblings, relatives and friends.

A wake will be held at 6, Jalan Jitong, Seletar Hills Estate (S809120); Prayers at 8pm.  
Cortege leaves on Saturday 19 January for Mass at the Church of St Vincent De Paul  
at 1.30pm; thence to Mandai Crematorium at 3.30pm.  
No wreaths please

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let there be laughter,  
and the sharing of pleasure.  
For in the dear of little things  
the heart finds  
its merriment and is refreshed.

Khalil Gibran

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**srClassifieds**

"Come, you whom my Father has blessed says the Lord, inherit the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34



## FRANCIS POH

Age: 79

was called home to be with the Lord  
on 16 January 2019

Dearly missed and fondly remembered  
by loved ones.

**Wife:** Betty Seah

<b>Sons:</b>	<b>Daughters-in-law:</b>
Raymond	Sumanah
Kenneth	Rina
Gregory	
<b>Grandsons:</b>	<b>Granddaughters:</b>
Zachary	Zara
Zeth	Zasha
	Nursabrina
	Adriana

**Siblings, in-laws, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.**

Wake is held at Blk 201 Bedok North St 1 Singapore 460201.  
Cortege will leave on Monday, 21 January 2019 at 2.00pm for  
funeral service at Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour,  
31 Siglap Hill Singapore 456085 at 2.30pm and thereafter  
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 4.15pm.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6

**Yesudason Johnkutty (Jesus)**

Age: 73

Called home to be with the Lord on 13th January 2019.  
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

**Wife:** Celine Cross

<b>Daughters:</b>	<b>Sons-in-law:</b>
Angelene Gionzago	Edwin Gionzago
Belinda Houghton	Adam Houghton
<b>Son:</b>	<b>Daughter-in-law:</b>
Charles Yesudason	Dawn Patrick
<b>Granddaughters:</b>	<b>Grandsons:</b>
Amelia Gionzago	Daniel Houghton
Bianca Gionzago	Lucius Gionzago
Hayley Charles	Aaron Houghton
	Hayden Charles
<b>Sisters:</b>	<b>Brothers-in-law:</b>
Philomena Edward	Edward Joseph
Pushpa Cherian	Cheriacchen Raimond (†)
Roslin Johnson	Johnson Raphael
Sherley Joseph	Yesudas Joseph
<b>Brothers:</b>	<b>Sisters-in-law:</b>
Stansilau Johnkutty	Doris Stansilau (†)
Solomon Johnkutty (†)	Molly Solomon
Stephen Johnkutty	
Anthony Johnkutty	Alice Anthony

Cherished and loved by all relatives and friends.

Funeral Service will be held on 18th January 2019  
In Melbourne, Australia.

A memorial service will be held in Singapore.

Details will be shared closer to date.

All memorial donations will be given to charity.

The family wishes to thank you for giving your unconditional  
love and support during this challenging period.

For further information, please WhatsApp or call  
Belinda (96442430)



## Jeow Lay Wah

Age: 90

Was called home to be with the Lord on 15 January 2019.

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

**Husband:** Foo Siang Wan (*deceased*)

<b>Sons:</b>	<b>Daughters-in-law:</b>
Foo Swan Keng Arthur	Chng Lay Beng Florence
Foo Chwan Toong Patrick	Wenny Indrawaty
<b>Daughters:</b>	<b>Sons-in-law:</b>
Foo Juat Buay Maureen ( <i>deceased</i> )	Tan Choon Fatt William
Foo Swee Ngan Judy ( <i>deceased</i> )	Fong Soon Kiang
Foo Swee Cheng Pauline	Cheok Eng Hoo Dennis
Foo Swee Wee Winnie	Lim Koon Pheng Henry
Foo Swee Lih Sally	

16 Grandchildren, 6 grandchildren-in-law,  
6 great-grandchildren, all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Block 163A Gangsa Road, Singapore 671163.

Night service on Friday 18 January 2019 at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Saturday 19 January 2019 at 9.45am for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4

for cremation at 10.45am.

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want...  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23

**Joseph Kang Lau Heng**

Age: 68

Was called home to the Lord on 16 January 2019.  
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

**Wife:** Catherine Ow Yeong Yoke Hong

<b>Sons:</b>	<b>Daughter-in-law:</b>
Anthony Kang Khang Wei	Yanitha Kitiyadom
Augustine Jiang Weida	
<b>Daughter:</b>	<b>Son-in-law:</b>
Theresa Jiang Yitian	Dr Brian Ang Ji Hua
<b>Grandsons:</b>	
Ethan Siriwyat Kang	
Tristan Jirayut Kang	
Evan Ang Xiang Zhe	

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Church of St Stephen, Prayer Room 1,  
30 Sallim Road, Singapore 387639.

Nightly prayers will be held at 8.00pm.

Funeral Mass on Saturday 19 January 2019 at  
Church of St Stephen at 11.00am, thereafter to Mandai

Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 12.45pm.

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[www.directfuneral.com.sg](http://www.directfuneral.com.sg)

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# OBITUARIES

With Deepest Sympathy &  
Heartfelt Condolences to Our  
Executive Chairman & CEO  
Mr. Thomas Tan and Family

On the demise of his Father-in-law



**Mr. Ng Cheng Siong**

Departed on 16 January 2019

From: The Board of Directors,  
Management and Staff of

**KIM HENG**  
OFFSHORE & MARINE HOLDINGS LIMITED

Wake is held at Block 817 French Road (Pavilion).  
Cortege leaves on Sunday 20 January 2019 at 2.00pm for  
cremation at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery at 3.00pm.



**FOO JUAT LAN**

Age: 102

passed away peacefully on 15 January 2019.  
*Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.*

**Husband:** Ham Joon Kiam (Deceased)

**Son:** Ham Wee Chin Rodney      **Daughter-in-law:** Elliana Lim Ah Tho  
**Daughters:** Ham Lam Foong Nancy      **Sons-in-law:** Lim Kwan Choon David  
Ham Tiew Heng Agnes      See Kwee Boon Francis  
Ham Soon Wah Cecilia (Deceased)      Low Chu Song Joseph  
Ham Wee Choo Veronica

**Godson:**

Ng Yew Keng

**Grandsons:**

Kenneth Ham Gao Jie  
Kendrick Ham Gao Jun  
Nicholas See Xianwei  
Jerome Low Jia Qi

**Granddaughters:**

Lim Ai Hoon Ivy  
Lim Meiyi Michelle  
Lim Shuwen Sherlyn  
Amy See Yuning  
Lim Xin Yan Jacqueline  
Melissa See Xinlei  
Aretha Low Jing Yan

**God-Grandson:**

Lim Kim Siang

**Daughter-in-law:** Elliana Lim Ah Tho

**Sons-in-law:** Lim Kwan Choon David  
See Kwee Boon Francis  
Low Chu Song Joseph

**Grandsons-in-law:**

Chia Kian Yong  
Philippe Van Rooij  
Toh Zheng Quan

**Great-Grandsons:**

Chia Yu Zhe Kyler  
Ethan Toh Yongrui

**And all relatives and friends.**

**Wake is held at Blk 311 Anchorage Lane**  
S'pore 540311 (Multi-Purpose Hall).  
Cortege will leave on Saturday, 19 January 2019  
at 3.15pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4  
for cremation at 4.15pm.

With Deepest Sympathy &  
Heartfelt Condolences to

**Our Managing Director  
Rodney Ham Wee Chin**

on the demise of  
his Beloved Mother



**MDM FOO JUAT LAN**  
on 15 January 2019

*From*  
**The Management & Staff of**

**A-PLUS AUTOMATION (S) PTE. LTD.**  
**A-PLUS AUTOMATION (M) SDN. BHD.**

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7*



**Sim Kiok Hong Mary**

Age: 83

Was called home to be with the Lord on 16 January 2019.  
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

**Father:** late Victor Sim  
**Mother:** late Chew Poh Chum  
Anna Sim

**Brothers:**  
late John Sim  
Henry Sim  
**Sisters:**  
Lily Sim  
late Lucy Sim  
late Alice Sim  
Amber Sim  
**Nephews / Nieces:**  
Alan Boey  
Ken Law  
Andrew Boey  
Alina Sim  
Bertina Sim  
Lynette Boey  
Angelina Lau  
Adeline Lau  
Allison Lau  
**Grand-Nephew & Grand-Nieces:**  
Clive Oon, Stephanie Boey, Jennifer Boey,  
Audrey Wong, Naomi Boey, Alvina Boey  
and Arissa Anthony

**And all relatives and loved ones.**

Wake is held at Direct Funeral Services Memorial Hall,  
89 Geylang Bahru Industrial Estate,  
#01-2734, Singapore 339697.

Night service on Thursday 17 January 2019 at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Friday 18 January 2019 at 12.40pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 3  
for cremation at 1.40pm.

*"In memoriam"*  
is for the loved  
ones whom you  
remember...

*"In memoriam"*  
is for the loved  
ones whom you  
remember...

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7*



**Wu Sing Chiok**

Age: 86

Was called home to be with the Lord on 15 January 2019.  
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

**Sons & Daughters-in-law:**  
Richard & Nancy  
Philippe & Yvonne  
**Daughters & Son-in-law:**  
Amy  
Polly (deceased)  
Sister-in-law  
Theresa & Takashi

**Grandchildren & Spouses:**  
Denise & Alvin, Stephanie & Kevin,  
Benedict & Geraldine, Jonathan,  
Amena, Nicholas  
**Great-Grandchildren:**  
Kirsten, Alvey, Christian, Cordelia  
And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Block 524  
Tampines Central 7.

Cortege leaves on Sunday  
20 January 2019 at 10.40am  
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2  
for cremation at 11.40am.

**3rd Anniversary  
In Ever Loving Memory of**



**ANGELA CHOO CHIN CHIN**

Departed on 17 January 2016

*Three years passed by so quickly but you have  
not been forgotten in every way - your smile,  
your voice and your every gesture. You were  
deeply missed by all your loved ones here!*

**Deeply missed by:**

Mum  
Brother Gus  
Brother Alvin & Sister-in-law Lily  
& Nephews Jayden & Jasper

*"Surely goodness and mercy  
shall follow me all the days  
of my life, and I will dwell  
in the house of Lord forever."  
Psalm 23:6*



**GOMES STELLA  
MAFELDA**

Age: 100

Was called home to be with the Lord on 15 January 2019

leaving behind loved ones.

**Husband:**  
Johnson Christopher Gomes  
(deceased)  
**Daughter:**  
Cynthia Teresa Shepherdson

**Son-in-law:** Kevin Ho  
**Grandchildren:** Keegan Ho  
Denise Ho, Jean Ho  
And relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Church of St.

Teresa, 510 Kg Bahru Road,  
S'pore 409946

Funeral service will be on  
17 January 2019 (Thursday)  
at 3pm. Cortege will leave  
at 4.15pm for Mandai  
Crematorium Hall 3 for  
cremation at 5.15pm.

**IN LOVING MEMORY**



**SUBRAMANIAM PILLAY**   **ANJIAMMAL PILLAY**

Departed: 14 Feb 1975   Departed: 17 Jan 1995

*Dearly & Always missed by  
Loving Children & Loved Ones*

*We make a living  
by what we get.  
We make a life  
by what we give.*

Sir Winston Churchill

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# SPORT

12

GAMES TOTTENHAM'S HARRY KANE COULD  
MISS OWING TO HIS ANKLE INJURY C9

SMBG Singapore Open 2019

## ASIAN GOLFERS POSE THREAT

**While Casey and Garcia are big draws, Thais and Japanese are aiming to make an impact**

**Lester Wong**

Paul Casey is the highest-ranked golfer at the US\$1 million (S\$1.35 million) SMBC Singapore Open and was part of Europe's victorious Ryder Cup team last year.

But when the world No. 24 heard that Thailand's Poom Saksansin was also in the 156-man field, he said in mock horror: "Is he playing this week? Yes? Oh no."

Jokes aside, the Asian threat is very real for European stars such as himself and defending champion Sergio Garcia, who stopped the Asian streak at two since the Open returned after a three-year hiatus. Thailand's Prayad Marksaeng won in 2017 and South Korean Song Young-han in 2016.

Poom beat Casey in last January's EurAsia Cup, although Europe eventually won 14-10.

"He outplayed me in the singles,"

Casey said of his flight mate today. "Putted brilliantly and dusted me off at the last, and I was playing very nicely that week too. That just shows (the rise of Asian golf)."

"You see the best (Asian) players playing world golf but it's now very deep as well. I don't think we could honestly say that a decade ago."

Poom won last month in an Indonesian Masters field that included world No. 1 Justin Rose and 2016 The Open Championship winner Henrik Stenson.

He is expected to lead the Asian charge alongside compatriot Jazz Janewattananond, second in Indonesia and fourth in Singapore

last year, and South Korean Park Sang-hyun, second on the 2018 Asian Tour money list.

Poom said of Sentosa Golf Club's 7,403-yard Serapong Course: "It is very tough. It's long for me because I don't hit it very far so I have to rely on my short game and smart play."

Ryo Ishikawa is also hoping that he and his fellow Japanese can make an impact in the event co-sanctioned by the Asian Tour and the Japan Golf Tour Organisation.

"It's rare for the Japanese to be able to watch and compete against top players like Sergio and Paul so this is a huge chance and opportunity," the world No. 220 said yester-

day in a pre-event conference.

"Shigeki Maruyama and Ryuji Imada showed us how to compete with top foreign players on the PGA and European Tours and now it's our turn. Hideki (Matsuyama) is the best Japanese player now and we are all trying to follow him."

The former teen prodigy has not won since August 2016 but fancies his chances this week. He finished tied-16th in his first Singapore Open appearance last year.

"Last season was very tough but the last month or so was very big for me," said Ishikawa, who lost in a play-off to eventual champion Satoshi Kodaira at the Golf Nippon

Series JT Cup last month.

"Although I couldn't win, I think I felt something (in my game) that I'd lost the last couple of years."

This year, there are 12 Singaporeans, eight professionals and four amateurs, including Choo Tze Huang. The 32-year-old said: "It's always nice to be playing at home. My game is going in the right direction so I just have to keep working, give my 100 per cent, and we'll see what happens."

lesterw@sph.com.sg

**SMBG SINGAPORE OPEN**

Day 1: StarHub Ch201, 9am & 3pm

Defending champion Sergio Garcia, flanked by Englishmen Matthew Fitzpatrick (far left) and Paul Casey, playfully showing his reluctance to hand back the trophy during Tuesday's press conference. The home contingent for the SMBC Singapore Open at the Serapong Course in Sentosa comprises eight pros and four amateurs. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



### Key men to watch

**SERGIO GARCIA, 39**

**World ranking:** 27  
**Career highlights:** 2017 Masters champion, 10-time PGA Tour winner, record points scorer in the Ryder Cup.

**Why he could win:** The Spaniard shrugged off the heat, fatigue and rain delays to win the Singapore Open by five strokes. Even playing 27 holes on the final day did not faze him; he did not drop a shot. That helped him get off to a good start last year and he also ended strongly with five top 10s, winning the Andalucia Valderrama Masters as host and was tied-ninth at the DP World Tour Championship.

**PAUL CASEY, 41**

**World ranking:** 24  
**Career highlights:** Two-time PGA Tour winner, 13-time European Tour winner, 2006 European Player of the Year.

**Why he could win:** The cheerful Englishman is the highest-ranked player. He is slightly ahead in preparations, having already played twice in Hawaii this year, and that could work to his advantage. Casey showed last March he still has the game to mix it up with the best when he won the Valspar Championship for his first PGA Tour triumph since 2009.

**MATTHEW FITZPATRICK, 24**

**World ranking:** 40  
**Career highlights:** Five-time European Tour winner, finished tied-seventh at the 2016 Masters.

**Why he could win:** Fitzpatrick has consistently been talked up as the next big thing in European golf, with good reason. He became the youngest Englishman to win three European Tour titles at 22 when he won the DP World Tour Championship in 2016. The man who he displaced in the record books was none other than former No. 1 and six-time Major winner Nick Faldo.

**RYO ISHIKAWA, 27**

**World ranking:** 220  
**Career highlights:** Youngest winner on the Japan Golf Tour Organisation at 15 years and eight months, youngest player to reach the top 50 and 100 in the world rankings.

**Why he could win:** The question marks hanging over Ishikawa have never been about his talent. He shared the lead at the halfway mark last year but petered out over the last two rounds. If he can be consistent, there is every chance he could be in contention come Sunday.

**JAZZ JANEWATTANANOND, 23**

**World ranking:** 111  
**Career highlights:** Youngest golfer to make the cut on the Asian Tour aged 14 years and 71 days, two-time Asian Tour winner.

**Why he could win:** The Thai was fourth at Sentosa last year and that earned him a spot at The Open Championship. And he is well-placed for a repeat performance, being the form player on the Asian Tour – third and second in his last two events of 2018 and finished fifth at the Boonchu Ruangkit Championship to start the year.

Lester Wong

## Eye on SEA Games medal with launch of duathlon plan

**Nicole Chia**

National triathlete Phoebe Kee has won several local races in recent years, such as the 2017 Tri-Factor Triathlon.

But the 18-year-old believes she is a better fit for the duathlon (run-bike-run) and is keen to make the switch in time to represent Singa-

pore at the Nov 30-Dec 11 SEA Games in the Philippines, where the event will make a comeback since Thailand 2007.

"Running is my strong point; I'm stronger in the run than the swim and I have a better shot at the duathlon," said Kee, who is starting her undergraduate studies in Sydney next month, explaining why she would fare better than in the swim-bike-run race.

She is aiming to be in the Triathlon Association of Singapore's (TAS) national high performance duathlon programme, which will be launched at the Singapore Duathlon National Championship at East Coast Park on Sunday. The qualifying mark for the 10km run, 36km bike ride and 5km run is the 2007 bronze medal

times: 2hr 4min for men and 2hr 26min for women.

Athletes, led by technical director Eugene Lee, will have to put in a weekly training load of 20 to 30 hours and undergo frequent fitness assessments.

TAS general manager Eugene Ong told ST he is confident that Singapore can win a duathlon medal.

"Initially our high performance

programme did not include the duathlon but, since it's going to be a SEA Games event, we decided to launch this programme to prepare our athletes for it," he added.

Sunday's event will feature some of the Philippines' top athletes, such as 2016 and 2017 men's national champion Jarwyn Banatao, as well as Singapore's 2015 SEA Games men's triathlon bronze medallist

Loo Chuan Rong and Standard Chartered Singapore Marathon top local woman Lim Baoying.

Kee, who has been increasing her mileage in the last few months, said: "It's going to be a very exciting race. If I qualify, I will train towards getting a medal at the SEA Games."

nicole@sph.com.sg

# WHAT'S NEXT FOR CRIPPLED SPURS?

Club could be forced to spend on a new striker with Kane out for at least 2 months

LONDON • Absolutely devastating. That was the reaction of former Tottenham forward Chris Waddle to the news Harry Kane would be ruled out for at least two months after suffering ankle ligament damage during the 1-0 Premier League loss to Manchester United over the weekend.

Spurs' prospects of winning a first trophy under manager Mauricio Pochettino this season suffered a significant blow on Tuesday when the club announced Kane – the league's joint-top scorer on 14 goals – was "expected to return to training in early March".

"Following preliminary assessments, we can confirm that @HKane has damaged ligaments in his left ankle," an official Spurs tweet read. "He will continue to be monitored by our medical staff as he commences rehabilitation."

The England captain tweeted in response that while "injuries are part of the game, no one will be working harder to get back fit".

The talismanic striker could possibly miss 12 matches, including a



Tottenham striker Harry Kane holding his leg in pain during the 1-0 Premier League defeat by Manchester United on Sunday. The club have confirmed that he is out with ankle ligament damage. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

potential League Cup final, both legs of their Champions League last-16 tie against Borussia Dortmund, and seven league games, as Spurs strive to keep up with leaders Liverpool and Manchester City.

The 25-year-old is no stranger to ankle problems, having endured time on the sidelines in the last

three years and missing seven weeks in 2016 in what was his most significant spell out.

However, with Tottenham 1-0 up in the first leg of their League Cup semi-final against Chelsea, his absence this time is untimely.

Pochettino, who has yet to deliver silverware since joining the

club in 2014, is already without Son Heung-min – potentially until Feb 1 – while he plays for South Korea at the Asian Cup, and he has ruled out reintroducing out-of-favour Vincent Janssen to the first team.

That leaves Lucas Moura, who should return at Fulham on Sunday after knee trouble, and Fernando Llorente – who has in effect been available for transfer and has been the subject of interest from Barcelona – as his strike options for the foreseeable future.

The club had not anticipated entering the market this month and it remains to be seen if that policy shifts in the wake of Kane's injury.

Waddle told BBC Radio 5 Live it was now imperative for Spurs to bolster their front line in the transfer window and prevent their season from petering out.

He said: "I'm sure they're looking around Europe. Could they get someone on loan to tick them over until the end of the season?"

However, The Mirror claimed that Spurs could instead splash the cash with Bournemouth's Callum Wilson mooted as a possibility.

While the Cherries have reportedly slapped a £75 million (\$130.6 million) asking price on the England forward to ward off any suitors, Sky Sports said Spurs have "admired" the 26-year-old for some time.

His nine league goals in 20 appearances this season have fired his club to mid-table safety and Sky Sports pundit Liam Rosenior felt Wilson would be the "perfect fit" to fill Kane's shoes.

The former Brighton defender added: "He is of a profile where he would be delighted to have the chance to play for a club like Spurs."

"He gives them the pace to run in behind. I wouldn't be surprised if they put a marker down, and show they want to keep Pochettino and build for the future."

THE GUARDIAN, THE TIMES, LONDON

## EPL sinks anchor here to fight piracy, support partners

### Wang Meng Meng

In a bid to combat content piracy and support broadcast partners, the English Premier League (EPL) opened its first international office in Singapore on Monday.

The Tanjong Pagar office will be the league's Asia-Pacific base to protect its copyrights as well as to promote the competition.

The EPL's director of broadcasting Paul Molnar said: "The Asia-Pacific (Apac) region is strategically important for the Premier League and its clubs."

"Singapore provides an excellent location for our first international office and we look forward to using this base to support our many broadcast partners across the region."

"Equally, it is critical that we now deploy local resource and expertise to combat the increasing threat of piracy which undermines all stakeholders in the creative industry."

According to an EPL spokesman, the Singapore office will be headed by Matthew Cheetham, who is the EPL's head of business for Apac.

And while the office officially opened this week, the spokesman added that the EPL is already actively carrying out its enforcement programme in the region and taken action in the South-east Asia region against vendors who peddle

set-top boxes that can stream football matches illegally.

According to London-based Digital TV Research, online TV and movie piracy will cost the industry an estimated US\$31.8 billion (\$43 billion) in global revenue in 2017, reaching US\$51.6 billion by 2022.

In May 2017, the BBC reported that two Britons and a Thai were arrested in Bangkok for selling illegal access to football broadcasts. The trio were accused of causing damages worth more than 100 million baht (\$4.2 million).

That same year, the EPL secured a court order in Britain that gave it the means to block computer servers that host illegal streams of its football content.

The EPL spokesman added that the league was part of a group of media companies and rights owners that took two Android TV box sellers to court in Singapore.

These boxes, costing about \$219, come pre-loaded with apps that gave viewers unauthorised access to EPL games as well as movies and documentaries on cable channels.

Also, in November last year, the High Court ordered eight new piracy websites and any others related to them to be blocked, bringing the number of blocked websites to just over 60 since copyright rules were amended four years ago.

meng@sph.com.sg

### Son helps South Korea to win Asian Cup group



A day after injured top scorer Harry Kane was ruled out till March, Tottenham's other in-form man Son Heung-min showed what Spurs would be missing during his absence owing to the Asian Cup. Handed the captain's armband, the South Korean revitalised the Taeguk Warriors with two assists against China at the Al Nahyan Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday, after they were able to only scrape 1-0 wins in their first two Group C games. Son, playing less than 72 hours after Sunday's Premier League 1-0 loss to Manchester United, earned the first chance after he was tripped and Hwang Ui-jo put away the penalty after 14 minutes. His second assist came six minutes after the break, an inswinging corner that Kim Min-jae (above) met with a powerful header for his second goal of the Cup. Korea, joint favourites with Iran, won the group with nine points, with China on six. Kyrgyzstan beat the Philippines 3-1 to finish third but can still reach the last 16. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

### Epson and Geylang still flying high



Japanese electronics company Epson has announced that it will sponsor Singapore Premier League football club Geylang International for a fourth consecutive year. The parties, led by Epson Singapore managing director Toshimitsu Tanaka (far left) and Geylang chairman Ben Teng, held a signing ceremony for the one-year partnership extension at Warren Golf & Country Club on Tuesday. As part of the partnership, Epson and Geylang will explore new platforms to reach out to more local youths with the opportunity to participate in football clinics at overseas clubs. PHOTO: GEYLING INTERNATIONAL

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### SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS

Event Home Away Timing Venue

Thu, 17 Jan 2019

Asian Cup Oman Turkmenistan 9.30pm LW\*

Asian Cup Japan Uzbekistan 9.30pm LW\*

Fri, 18 Jan 2019

Asian Cup Saudi Arabia Qatar 12.00am LW\*

Asian Cup Lebanon Korea DPR 12.00am LW\*

LW\* : Telecast available at Livewire(Marina Bay Sands) only

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**LOTTERY**

**TOTO** Thu, 17 Jan 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3441/2019

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# SPORT

Australian Open 2019

## BIG THREE STILL HIGHLY FANCIED

**Federer agrees with Djokovic that they and Nadal know best how to tackle Grand Slams**

MELBOURNE • Roger Federer has given cold comfort to the next generation of men's players hoping for Grand Slam glory, saying that he, Serbia's Novak Djokovic and Spaniard Rafa Nadal are still deserving favourites to claim the game's biggest trophies.

The top three seeds at Melbourne Park snapped up all four of the Majors between them last year, with Federer winning his sixth Australian Open, Nadal claiming his 11th French Open and top-ranked Djokovic sweeping both Wimbledon and the US Open.

The Swiss great is bidding for his 21st Grand Slam crown and a hat-

trick of Melbourne titles this year, and he sailed into the third round yesterday with a straight-sets 7-6 (7-5), 7-6 (7-3), 6-3 win over British qualifier Dan Evans.

Before the tournament began, top seed Djokovic declared the trio were again the favourites to win the Slams this year, and Federer agreed when asked after his match.

"Yes, I guess so," the third seed told reporters. "I mean, look, we know how to win Slams, Novak, Rafa, myself. I mean, Rafa has to be the No. 1 favourite, I don't care how he feels, before the French."

"Novak is always a favourite on the hard courts, basically any court

if he's feeling 100 per cent, if he plays like last year."

"Maybe just because of my amount of titles I have at Wimbledon and other places, maybe also have to put me in the mix every time, as well."

The last time a player not named Federer, Djokovic or Nadal won a Grand Slam was at the 2016 US Open where Swiss Stan Wawrinka lifted his third Grand Slam trophy.

Pundits have decried the younger generation's failure to break into the Slam cartel enjoyed by the old guard, though some have tipped change at the top this year.

German fourth seed Alexander Zverev, who won the ATP Tour Final event last November, is often touted as the player most likely to upset the apple cart. But he has only a solitary Slam quarter-final spot at

Roland Garros last year.

The 21-year-old will play France's Jeremy Chardy in the second round today and Federer felt he could be a dark horse this time round.

"There are other guys, no doubt about it," said the 37-year-old, who will play American Taylor Fritz in the third round tomorrow.

"Also, with Sascha (Zverev) holding the World Tour Final (title), it's fair to say that even though he has not ripped through those Slams yet, he will go deep this year, definitely at one of them."

"Maybe even here. We'll see."

There were no real shocks on the day with Nadal cruising to a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over Australian Matthew Ebden, while women's defending champion Caroline Wozniacki of Denmark also made it safely through after rolling past Sweden's Johanna Larsson 6-1, 6-3.

However, it was curtains for South African fifth seed Kevin Anderson, bowing out in a 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, 7-5 loss to American Frances Tiafoe, who equalled his best progression at a Slam.

Ninth-seeded Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens was overpowered 3-6, 6-3, 6-3 by Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova as the women's draw also suffered an exit by a top-10 player.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

### AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Day 4: Singtel TV Ch114/Ch115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm

### SELECTED DAY 3 RESULTS

#### MEN, 2ND RD

Marin Cilic (Cro) bt Mackenzie McDonald (USA) 7-5 6-7(9-11) 6-4 6-4, Frances Tiafoe (USA) bt Kevin Anderson (Rsa) 4-6 6-4 6-4 7-5, Karen Khachanov (Rus) bt Yoshihito Nishioka (Jpn) 6-3 6-3 6-3, Rafael Nadal (Esp) bt Matthew Ebden (Aus) 6-3 6-2 6-2, Taylor Fritz (USA) bt Gael Monfils (Fra) 6-3 6-7 (8-10) 7-6 (8-6) 7-6 (7-5).

#### WOMEN, 2ND RD

Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (Rus) bt Kiki Bertens (Ned) 3-6 6-3 6-3, Caroline Wozniacki (Den) bt Johanna Larsson (Swe) 6-16-3, Petra Kvitova (Cze) bt Irina Begu (Rou) 6-1 6-3, Aryna Sabalenka (Blr) bt Katie Boulter (Gbr) 6-3 6-4, Angelique Kerber (Ger) bt Beatriz Haddad Maia (Bra) 6-2 6-3, Maria Sharapova (Rus) bt Rebecca Peterson (Swe) 6-2 6-1. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## SportsWorld

### Wada to file report at end of Russia mission

MOSCOW • The World Anti-Doping Agency's compliance review committee (CRC) will not file a report until the Moscow mission is complete due to a threat of interference in the collection of data and safety concerns for its inspection team, Wada said on Tuesday.

The team, in Moscow since last Wednesday, is close to wrapping up its mission and any delays in producing a report would be minor.

Wada's executive committee will consider the CRC's recommendations and will announce its ruling on Jan 22 as scheduled. REUTERS

### Chelsea face partial stadium closure

LONDON • Chelsea face the prospect of partial closure of Stamford Bridge in the Europa League after Uefa opened disciplinary proceedings over allegations that their fans engaged in racist chants during the draw at Hungary's Vidi last month.

Europe's football governing body announced on Tuesday that proceedings had been initiated against Chelsea. Its control, ethics and disciplinary body will deal with the case at its next meeting on Feb 28, with the minimum punishment being the partial closure of their stadium in a subsequent fixture after the second leg of their last-32 tie with Sweden's Malmo on Feb 21. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

### Fulham sign Babel until end of season

LONDON • Fulham have signed Dutch international forward Ryan Babel from Turkey's Besiktas on a permanent deal until the end of the season, the Premier League football club said on Tuesday.

The 32-year-old former Liverpool man is manager Claudio Ranieri's first signing of the January window as the 19th-placed Cottagers seek a way out of the relegation zone. Babel, who told the club website he had faith that Fulham can stay up, could make his debut when they host Tottenham in the league on Sunday. REUTERS



American Frances Tiafoe stretching for a return in his upset win over fifth seed Kevin Anderson of South Africa in the second round of the Australian Open in Melbourne yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

## Wild, wild 51pt 1st period in the West

DENVER • It has been a season riddled with inconsistency and punctuated by injuries but on Tuesday, the Golden State Warriors showed why they remain the favourites for the hat-trick of titles because of their propensity to put on a "fireworks show".

The Denver Nuggets were top of the Western Conference and riding the crest of a 12-game winning streak at home.

But in a terrifying display of

power and panache, Golden State's 142-111 victory over the Nuggets, their fifth straight in the National Basketball Association, demonstrated that the kinks had been ironed out and they were now "playing with purpose".

Warriors coach Steve Kerr purred over his team's "beautiful, beautiful basketball" as they exploded with 51 points in the first quarter. It was the first time a team scored 50 points in the opening period since

Nov 10, 1990, when the Phoenix Suns totalled 50 against the same opponents.

It was also only the sixth time in league history a team had notched over 50 points in the first 12 minutes, but the Warriors did not stop there as they went on to set another record – the first to score over 140 points while nailing 10 or fewer free throws.

It was not like the Nuggets capitulated, with Malik Beasley contributing 22 points to lead four of his teammates in double figures.

Their coach Michael Malone was effusive in his praise, admitting post-game that Kerr's players had "sent a message" at the Pepsi Centre as they overtook his team at the top of the West.

After Denver (29-14) fell 1/2 game behind Golden State (30-14), Malone said: "Give them credit. They came in here and showed why they're one of the best teams in the world and they've won multiple world championships for a reason."

Kerr agreed with his counterpart, admitting "that was as good

as it gets". He told reporters after Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson led all scorers to finish the night with 31 points apiece: "I liked the way our guys moved the ball."

"A lot of shot fakes, playing with a simple style of execution but aggressive at the same time. Finding that balance is always what we're looking for."

He revealed the Warriors had been stung by a 100-98 loss on their last road trip to Denver in October and were fired up, adding: "I figured our guys would be excited to play. They came in focused and aggressive."

Social media was equally abuzz with ESPN personality Skip Bayless tweeting "better hurry back, LeBron" – in reference to Los Angeles Lakers star James, whose team went 4-7 in his 11-game absence with a groin injury.

The Warriors can only get better. Four-time All Star DeMarcus Cousins is set to make his long-awaited debut against the Los Angeles Clippers tomorrow after a year out with an Achilles heel injury. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## A Game of Two Halves

It's an action-packed episode, with Loh Kean Yew's giant-killing act, Ikhsan Fandi's Norwegian career, Andy Murray's retirement and David de Gea's heroics. <http://str.sg/ousa>



## Next 48 Hours

### TODAY

#### FOOTBALL

AFB Asian Cup Group F: Japan v Uzbekistan (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209), Oman v Turkmenistan (Ch116 & Ch210) – 9.20pm. Gp E: Saudi Arabia v Qatar (Ch114 & Ch208), Lebanon v North Korea (Ch115 & Ch209) – 11.50pm.

#### GOALS

European Tour Abu Dhabi C'ship: Day 2 (StarHub Ch204, 3pm). Asian Tour SMBC Singapore Open, Day 1: sessions 1 (9am) & 2 (3pm) – StarHub Ch201. Serapong Course, Sentosa Golf Club, 7.30am. LPGA Tour Tournament of Champions: Day 1 (Singtel TV Ch116 & StarHub Ch210, tomorrow, 1am).

#### TENNIS

Australian Open Day 4 (Singtel TV Ch114/Ch115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm).

### TOMORROW

#### BASKETBALL

ABL Alab Pilipinas v Macau Black Bears (StarHub Ch202, 8pm).

#### FOOTBALL

Spanish LaLiga Getafe v Alaves (StarHub Ch213, Saturday, 3.55am).

#### GOLF

European Tour Abu Dhabi C'ship: Day 3 (StarHub Ch204, 4pm). Asian Tour SMBC Singapore Open, Day 2: sessions 1 (11am) & 2 (3pm) – StarHub Ch201. Serapong Course, Sentosa Golf Club, 7.30am. LPGA Tour Tournament of Champions: Day 2 (Singtel TV Ch116 & StarHub Ch210, Saturday, 1am).

#### TENNIS

Australian Open Day 5 (Singtel TV Ch114/Ch115 & StarHub Ch208/209, 8am & 4pm).

For latest updates, go to [singletv.com.sg](http://singletv.com.sg) & [starhubgo.com](http://starhubgo.com) or check the on-screen TV guide.

# life

D

**TOP-GROSSING FILMS OF 2018**  
Superheroes rule

D3

*Life will only change  
when you become  
more committed to  
your dreams than you are  
to your comfort zone.*

- Billy Cox

*live more,  
bank less* 

## SINGAPORE SHOWTIME



Ibu, or "mother" in Malay, is a nod to Malay folk tales and classic films from the 1950s, but director M. Raihan Halim says his take will cover "ideas not yet explored". PHOTOS: PAPAHAN FILMS, TAIPAN FILMS

**Watch out for a pontianak scare fest, a colourful tale starring drag queens and Anthony Chen's second film**



**John Lui**  
Film Correspondent

A highly anticipated follow-up from an award-winning director, a monster movie set underground and a dystopian comedy are among the local films Singaporeans can look forward to watching in 2019.

Last year's crop of about a dozen releases made in Singapore or by Singaporeans will be matched by the same number this year, if a list provided by the Singapore Film Commission is any indication.

It shows that while overall cinema attendance might have taken a small dip – as recent data has shown – film-makers are still keeping busy and maintaining output.

The 2019 programme runs the gamut. There is the drama Wet Season – celebrated film-maker Anthony Chen's new work after 2013's family drama Ilo Ilo. Circle Line is a horror film set underground. And in a stroke of coincidence, there will be two movies inspired by the Southeast-Asian myth of the female demon, the pontianak.

One of them is Ibu, or "mother" in Malay. It is directed by M. Raihan Halim and the follow-up to his debut film, the wrestling coming-of-age story Banting (2014).

Speaking to The Straits Times, he says that while his pontianak movie is a nod to Malay folk tales and classic films from the 1950s, his take will cover "ideas not yet explored".

Instead of making the horrific acts of the demon the focus, he says his film will be driven by characters coping with the attack.

"It is about a mother trying to connect with her stepdaughter," he adds.

In a previous interview, film-

maker Glen Goei says his take on the she-demon legend, Revenge Of The Pontianak, will be a more straightforward homage to the classic movie format.

Film-maker Tan Bee Thiam will make his solo feature film debut with Tiong Bahru Social Club, which he describes as a "satirical comedy with dark moments".

Tan, who co-directed the film adaptation of stage production Fundamentally Happy (2015), says his film is set in a future Singapore in which happiness has become a social-driven social goal.

His movie differs from technodystopias such as those depicted in the Netflix series Black Mirror (2011 to present), he adds.

"I am interested in stories that are hopeful and happy," he says.

Horror flick Circle Line, however, will be grim. It depicts a group of people walking through a train tunnel who become prey to a creature.

Producer Juan Foo says the four-year production process involved "endless meetings, revisions and updates" to make sure they could pull off a credible monster movie within a typical Singapore production budget of between \$500,000 and \$1 million.

The film's fear factor takes advantage of the commuter worry of escaping through a dark tunnel after a train mishap.

"The film is set in a city, much like Singapore, where subways are part of the regular commute. Viewers will be able to identify with the story," he says.

johnlui@sph.com.sg

### Nine films starring Singapore talent in 2019

1

**IBU**  
Genre: Horror  
Director: M. Raihan Halim  
Cast: Alicia Amin, Sabrina Nasir and Izyan Mellyna  
Release: Late 2019

An unexpectedly widowed woman must build a bond with her estranged stepdaughter. Then a pontianak – a deadly female ghost – attaches herself to the child in the hope of keeping the girl to herself forever, unless the stepmother finds a way to break the grip.

2



**CIRCLE LINE**  
Genre: Horror  
Director: Chua Jing Du  
Cast: Jesseca Liu (above) and Patrick Li  
Release: Late 2019

A mother, played by Malaysian actress Liu, is among the passengers on the last train of the night. Something happens to the train and while escaping through a tunnel with her son, she and her fellow passengers discover they are not alone.

MORE STORIES  
on D2

FROM D1



Thomas Pang in Tiong Bahru Social Club, a comedy set in a future Singapore in which happiness has become a social goal. PHOTOS: 13 LITTLE PICTURES, ENCORE FILMS, GIRAFFE PICTURES, MGO FILMS, MM2 ENTERTAINMENT, TIGER TIGER PICTURES, WORMWOOD FILMS

3

**REVENGE OF THE PONTIANAK**

Genre: Horror  
Director: Glen Goei  
Cast: Nur Fazura (above), Remy Ishak and Wan Hanafi Su  
Release: 2019

Film-maker and theatre practitioner Goei's long-awaited follow-up to his mystery drama, The Blue Mansion (2009), is a homage to the horror classics of this region. Set in 1965, a village comes under the attack of a vengeful spirit. The villagers must overcome their differences to fight the evil or perish.

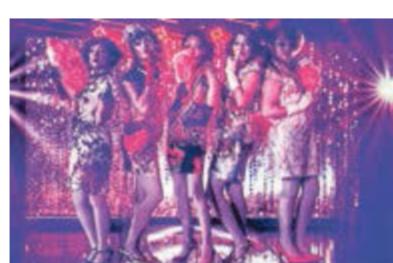
4

**FATHOPE**

Genre: Comedy  
Director: Joyce Lee  
Cast: Alien Huang, Lin Yu-pin (above), Liu Lingling, Quan Yifeng, Henry Thia and Wang Lei  
Release: June 2019

Director Lee makes her solo feature debut here after co-directing the cosplay story Young & Fabulous (2016). In this body-swap comedy, Taiwanese actress Lin plays a demanding model who finds herself suddenly obese because of a curse. Lee says the film is a personal work exploring "societal perceptions of obesity and beauty and aims to overturn assumptions". To get the body transformation right, the production hired an award-winning Hollywood make-up team. "These guys are the real deal," she says.

5

**NUMBER ONE**

Genre: Comedy  
Director: Ong Kuo Sin  
Cast: Mark Lee, Henry Thia, Kiwebaby Zhang, Jaspers Lai, Darius Tan and Kumar  
Release: Late 2019

Ong helmed the Chen Tianwen comedy Mr Unbelievable (2015), based on the viral music video, Unbelievable. He returns with another comic piece featuring Taiwanese transgender star Zhang and local cross-dressing comedian Kumar. Billed as a heart-warmer, the film follows an average Joe who reluctantly takes a job managing a group of nightclub drag queens. He finds friendship and respect as well as unlikely stardom.

6

**TIONG BAHRU SOCIAL CLUB**

Genre: Comedy  
Director: Tan Bee Thiam  
Cast: Thomas Pang, Goh Guat Kian, Jalyn Han, Jo Tan, Maimunah Bagharib and Noorlinah Mohamed  
Release: Late 2019

In the future, there is a plan to build The Happiest Neighbourhood In The World through data and analytics. A man is sent to find out how the residents are doing, but what he discovers is a world working on bizarre principles. Director and co-writer Tan says the film is inspired by the prevailing obsession with rankings, especially the happiness index, which rates countries based on the level of happiness of their citizens.

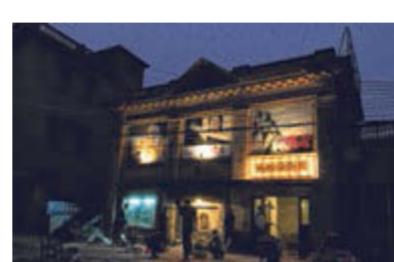
7

**WET SEASON**

Genre: Drama  
Director: Anthony Chen  
Cast: Yeo Yann Yann, Christopher Lee, Yang Shi Bin and Koh Jia Ler  
Release: Late 2019

The second film from writer-director Chen reunites child actor Koh and actress Yeo, both seen in his Camera d'Or-winning domestic drama Ilo Ilo (2013). In his new Mandarin-language work, a teacher becomes distraught because of her infertility and finds friendship in an unlikely place.

8

**CHANGFENG TOWN**

Genre: Drama  
Director: Tay Bee Pin  
Cast: Song Dai Wei, Liu Xin Rong, Cheng Gang and Wei Xi Di  
Release: Mid 2019

Local director Tay makes his feature debut in this Singapore-China co-production. Set in a small Chinese town, it tells the intertwined stories of the lives of several residents, separated into five chapters.

9

**MALAM**

Genre: Crime drama  
Director: Leonard Yip  
Cast: Jean Goh, R. Vishnu, Louis Wu, Yap Say Ping (above) and Sebastian Pio Pereira  
Release date: Late 2019

Yip, film-maker and senior lecturer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Film & Media Studies, makes his debut feature in this noir crime piece that takes place over one night. In an abandoned Housing Board block, a crime gang descends into paranoia and violence after certain revelations triggered by the arrival of a young recruit.

**Other films to catch this year**

- **A Land Imagined:** Yeo Siew Hua's arthouse police drama and winner of the Golden Leopard at the Locarno International Film Festival in Switzerland
- **A Love Unknown:** Experimental documentary-fiction piece by visual artist John Clang and his second feature
- **Demons:** Horror-comedy from independent film-maker Daniel Hui
- **Hell Hole:** Horror work from director Sam Loh
- **Killer Not Stupid:** A Jack Neo crime comedy
- **One Headlight:** Family drama by Ong Kuo Sin
- **When Ghost Meets Zombie:** Romantic comedy starring singing star Nathan Hartono

## Catch 'inspirational' films at CBD cinema

**John Lui**

A new cinema opens today in the heart of the financial district.

Located on the ninth level of Capital Tower in Robinson Road, the single-hall outlet Salt Media @ Capital Tower seats 228.

It is an independent operation and is not part of the major chains that include Golden Village Multiplex, Shaw Organisation and Cathay Cineplexes.

The cinema is the result of a part-

nership between media production and distribution house Salt Media & Entertainment and property firm CapitaLand.

In an interview with The Straits Times, Salt Media & Entertainment founder and chief executive Sherman Ng, 40, says the operation is the only full-fledged cinema in the Central Business District.

"It's a fresh take on the use of space in a building like Capital Tower. We are not competing with the likes of Golden Village, but we want to offer a curated set of films



Salt Media @ Capital Tower in Robinson Road is a cashless cinema that seats 228. It screens only films with "a valuable message, about family, courage, honour and human rights", says Salt Media & Entertainment chief Sherman Ng. PHOTO: SALT MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT

for people in the area," he adds.

One factor that will set the space apart is its choice of films. There will be an emphasis on what the firm calls "inspirational" films,

according to its press statement.

Mr Ng clarifies this to mean films that offer "a valuable message, about family, courage, honour and human rights".

The space is designed to be multi-purpose, so when it is not screening films, it can be hired for corporate events.

But Mr Ng considers it a proper cinema as it holds ticketed screenings open to the public and the hall features a 9m-wide screen, a 4K laser projector of the sort used in cinemas and a Dolby 7.1 sound system.

The cinema operates a cashless system. Snacks and drink transactions are carried out with Nets, credit cards and GrabPay. Ticket sales are online only at [www.SaltTheatres.com](http://www.SaltTheatres.com).

Ticket prices are higher than usual, at \$12 on weekdays and \$16 on weekends. Chain cinemas in the downtown area charge around \$9 on weekdays and \$12 on weekends.

Mr Ng says the higher ticket price is justified by factors such as the cost of space in the CBD and the con-

venience it offers to those working in the area who would not mind paying extra to save travel time to a cinema farther away.

The cinema's opening movie was *Storm Boy* (PG, 100 minutes), an Australian film based on the classic 1964 children's novel of the same name by Colin Thiele.

First turned into a well-regarded movie in 1976, this new remake tells the story of a child, Mike "Storm Boy" Kingley (played by Finn Little), who lives with his father Tom (Jai Courtney) in a remote area by the sea. The lonely boy rescues and raises three orphaned pelicans. He becomes attached to the one he names Mr Percival.

The premiere screening on Tuesday night at Salt Media @ Capital Tower was attended by Little and director Shawn Seet, as well as the Australian High Commissioner to Singapore, Mr Bruce Gosper.

# Superheroes rule box office



Avengers: Infinity War, starring (from far left) Benedict Cumberbatch, Robert Downey Jr., Mark Ruffalo and Benedict Wong, was the No. 1 film at the local box office last year. PHOTO: THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY

**Avengers: Infinity War was the No. 1 film at the local box office last year and also the highest-grossing film of all time in Singapore**

**Yip Wai Yee**  
Entertainment Correspondent

The fate of half of the Avengers superheroes remains up in the air, but one thing is for certain: They are rulers of the Singapore box office. *Avengers: Infinity War* is one of seven superhero films which dominated last year's chart while no Asian title cracked the overall top 10 for the third year in a row.

The film, which earned \$16.2 million, was not only the No. 1 film at the local box office last year, but it is also the highest-grossing film of all time in Singapore.

The previous highest-grossing film in Singapore was another title in the same franchise - *The Avengers* (2012), which earned \$13.7 million.

*Infinity War*'s box-office sales were so strong that it earned more than \$6 million more than the No. 2 film in Singapore last year - dinosaur blockbuster *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, which gobbled up \$9.93 million.

There was also plenty of love for other superheroes.

Black Panther, the film featuring

the black superhero of the same name, came in third place on the chart, with \$9.77 million in takings.

Aquaman, about the superhero who hails from the undersea world of Atlantis, is currently in fourth place with \$9.46 million. As the film is still showing in cinemas, it could potentially move up the ranks.

Meanwhile, *Venom* took the No. 8 spot (\$5.96 million), *Ant-Man And The Wasp* was No. 9 (\$5.56 million) and the foul-mouthed superhero in *Deadpool 2* came in at No. 10 (\$5.29 million).

In seventh place is a special superhero movie - Pixar animated film *Incredibles 2* (\$6.62 million), about a tight-knit superhero family.

This mirrors the strength of the superhero genre in the United States, where *Black Panther* was the champion with US\$700 million (\$949 million), *Avengers: Infinity War* was No. 2 with US\$678.8 million and *Incredibles 2* was third with US\$608.6 million.

Also cracking the top 10 in Singapore was *Crazy Rich Asians* (\$7.3 million) in sixth place.

Based on Singapore-born writer Kevin Kwan's bestselling novel of the same name, the romantic comedy gained a lot of traction here as the story is set in Singapore and features several Singaporean cast members, such as actors Pierre Ng and Selena Tan.

For all the love that Singaporeans showered on Hollywood films, less poured forth for Asian cinema as not a single Asian-language title made it to the Top 10 list for a third consecutive year.

On the list of top 10 Asian movies



Taiwanese tearjerker *More Than Blue*, which stars Jasper Liu and Ivy Chen (both above), is the top Asian movie. PHOTO: MM2

last year (2018), the No. 1 spot surprisingly went to Taiwanese tearjerker *More Than Blue*, which has earned \$1.78 million so far. The romance drama starring Jasper Liu and Ivy Chen is still showing exclusively at Cathay Cineplexes and only on eight screens - a far cry from the 50 screens that the second-best performing film, *Wonderful! Liang Xi Mei The Movie*, had opened on.

The local comedy, which earned \$1.76 million, had home-grown actor-director Jack Neo reprise the titular role of Liang Xi Mei, a beloved auntie character he had played in drag on television in the series *Comedy Night* from the mid-1990s to 2002.

Neo, 58, tells The Straits Times:

"The movie received support from Singaporeans because it was nostalgic for a lot of people. Even though it was brought to the big screen, we presented the character and story the way it was done on TV and we brought back all of the other original cast members as well, such as Mark Lee and Henry Thia. It was a team effort."

Singaporean moviegoers enjoyed South Korea's *Along With The Gods* as well, as both parts 1 and 2 of the fantasy series made it to the list. The first movie, *The Two Worlds*, was at No. 6 with \$1.12 million, while the second instalment, *The Last 49 Days*, was at No. 8 with \$1.05 million.

yipwy@sph.com.sg

## Top 10 movies in Singapore

### Overall top 10 movies

1. *Avengers: Infinity War* - \$16.2 million
2. *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* - \$9.93 million
3. *Black Panther* - \$9.77 million
4. *\*Aquaman* - \$9.46 million
5. *Mission: Impossible - Fallout* - \$7.38 million
6. *Crazy Rich Asians* - \$7.3 million
7. *Incredibles 2* - \$6.62 million
8. *Venom* - \$5.96 million
9. *Ant-Man And The Wasp* - \$5.56 million
10. *Deadpool 2* - \$5.29 million

### Top 10 Asian movies

1. *\*More Than Blue* - \$1.78 million
2. *Wonderful! Liang Xi Mei The Movie* - \$1.76 million
3. *Big Brother* - \$1.53 million
4. *Monster Hunt 2* - \$1.44 million
5. *\*Master Z: The Ip Man Legacy* - \$1.38 million
6. *Along With The Gods* - \$1.12 million
7. *Project Gutenberg* - \$1.07 million
8. *Along With The Gods 2: The Last 49 Days* - \$1.05 million
9. *The Monkey King 3* - \$930,000
10. *Operation Red Sea* - \$700,000

\* Showing in cinemas

## Portrait of a romantic outlaw

### REVIEW / CRIME BIOPIK

THE OLD MAN AND THE GUN (PG13)

94 minutes/Opens today/★★★★★

**The story:** Forrest Tucker (Robert Redford) is in his 70s, but is in no hurry to slow down his bank-robbing career. His victims call him a gentleman because of his unhurried, polite manner. Police detective John Hunt (Casey Affleck) is intrigued by Tucker's confidence and takes a personal stake in the case. Tucker meets Jewel (Sissy Spacek) and tries to woo her without revealing his double life. Based on a true story.

**John Lui**

This is the film that Redford has picked to close his career and it is a fitting one. This is a story of a senior

who has done what he loved for most of his life.

Tucker's bank-robbing job requires him to pretend to be someone else to win the trust of his target. And very much like an actor, his skill in maintaining a front is crucial to the success of the enterprise.

It is hard to watch this movie without feeling a good amount of goodwill for the 82-year-old Redford, and to separate the qualities one attaches to the actor from those of the movie. Luckily, the tone of the biopic resembles the man himself: Easy-going, affectionate, confident, with just a streak of the anti-establishment.

Redford's Tucker ambles in and out of banks he robs; his voice rises barely above a murmur when he makes his polite demands. He takes



only the cash at hand and the only implication of violence is a brief flash of a pistol as he opens his jacket.

Award-winning indie director David Lowery puts a deliberate pace - some might argue it's slow - into his work, which suits this material perfectly. His last film, *A Ghost Story* (2017, also starring Affleck), was a poetic take on the passage of time. In this film, Tucker, like the ethereal

being in Lowery's previous work, is a creature out of sync with the current time.

Tucker is a romantic outlaw, not from a previous decade, but a past century. He lives outside of society. His brushes with the law result in only a temporary reckoning with society before the expert jailbreaker is free again.

Affleck and Spacek play supporting characters that are mostly there to reflect Tucker's character of the

The Old Man And The Gun, which stars Robert Redford and Sissy Spacek (both left), is a biopic of a bank robber who leads a double life.

PHOTO: SHAW ORGANISATION

vagabond, but they hold their own as people who poke holes in Tucker's notions about the man he thinks he is.

This gentle portrait of a man who seems to have wandered out of the Old West is not quite a western, but with its ruminations about what it means to be truly free, it comes close and makes a fitting postscript to one of Redford's best-loved films, *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid* (1969).

# Sixth Sense director fights for his movies

M. Night Shyamalan says Hollywood still views his projects as precarious

Alison de Souza

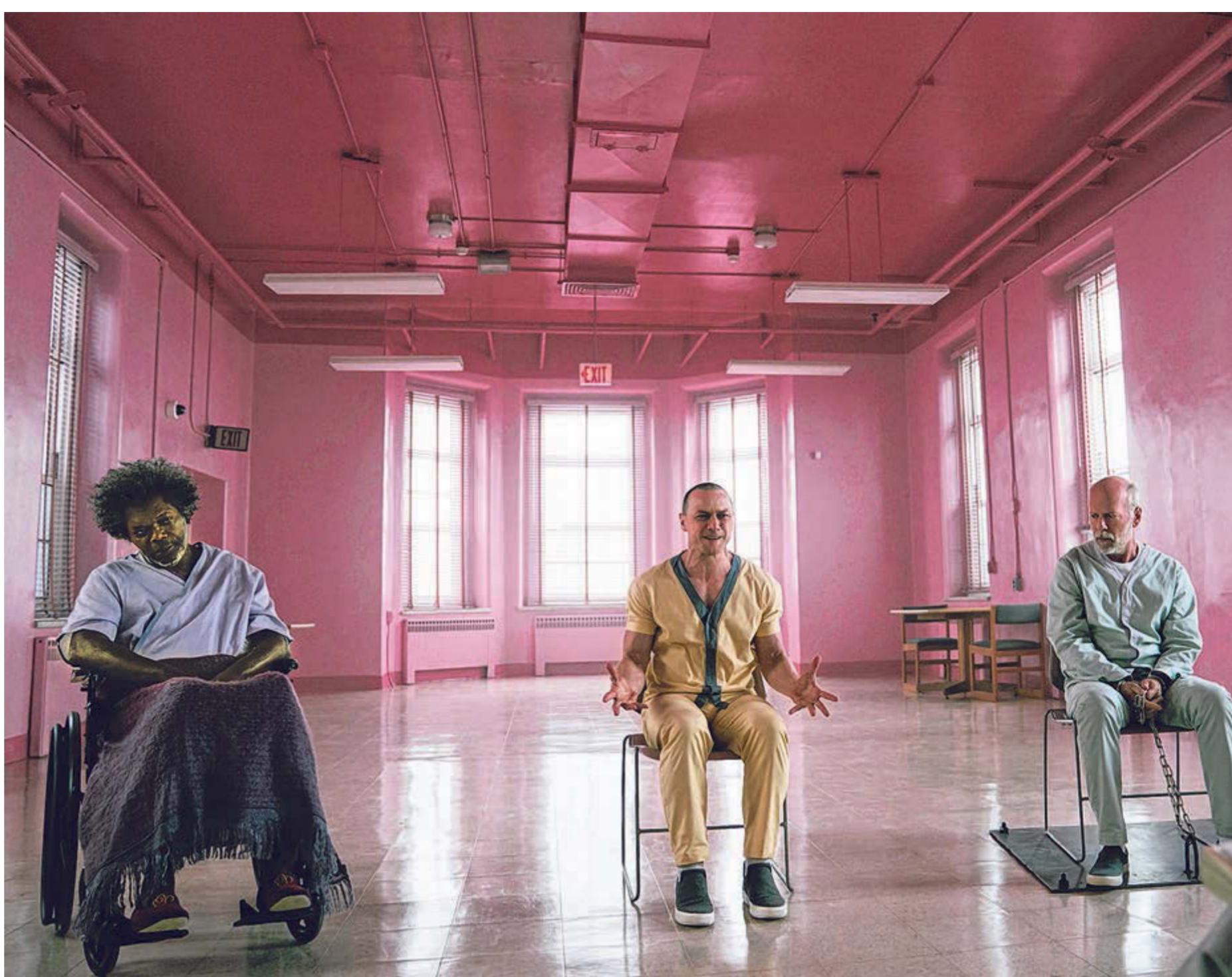
Twenty years after his supernatural sleeper hit The Sixth Sense set a new bar for twist endings, M. Night Shyamalan is, by most standards, a successful film-maker.

Yet as he unveils his latest movie, Glass – a sequel that ties together his critically acclaimed superhero story Unbreakable (2000) and his psychological thriller Split (2016) – the director still has to prove himself to Hollywood, he tells The Straits Times in a one-on-one chat in New York in November to promote the film.

Glass, which opens in Singapore today, sees Bruce Willis and Samuel L. Jackson reprise their Unbreakable roles and James McAvoy, his character from Split.

Shyamalan says Glass and other films of his are still initially viewed as risky propositions for those holding the purse strings in Tinseltown. But they are made anyway, in part because he is good at working within modest budgets, he says.

Still, Glass, Split and found-footage horror flick The Visit (2015) were “very precarious”, says the director, who was born in India and moved to the United States with his parents at age six. “You put your house up, there’s no money, you’re



at risk, you’re doing crazy stuff.”

Take for instance The Visit, about two children who realise the estranged grandparents they are staying with for the first time are rather odd (spoilers ahead for this and Split).

“If you saw The Visit, its climax is a child that gets a diaper of faeces in his face, right? You can’t (ordinarily) make that and have that be the culmination, and yet if you saw that in a theatre, you’ve never heard a reaction like that. It unleashes people and it just freed me.”

Split, which starred Scottish actor McAvoy as a man with multiple personalities, was tough to get greenlit too.

“I would say, ‘Here’s the idea: we’re going to have children abducted and then two of them are going to get eaten, then we’re going to flashback to a child’s rape. Everybody still with me?’ quips Shyamalan, who has been married to psychologist Bhavna Vaswani for 25 years and has three daughters.

“This is like a non-starter, right? But you make it because you believe in it and you prove it to them and you show (the movie) to them and they’re like, ‘Wow, I was exhilarated.’

“Then their expectations rise and it’s like, ‘Oh, maybe it will make US\$100 million (S\$135 million).’ Then, ‘Oh, it’s making US\$200 mil-

lion? Oh, US\$280 million?’”, he says.

His top-earning film, The Sixth Sense (1999), raked in US\$293 million worldwide, while Signs (2002) made US\$227 million and Split US\$138 million.

“You have to keep proving,” he says, although he does not mention that the scepticism he faces might have something to do with his infamous losing streak at the box office. He made a string of supernatural and science-fiction films that bombed, from Lady In The Water (2006) to The Last Airbender (2010) to After Earth (2013).

But, he maintains: “I like that idea of proving, I don’t mind being in that position of (people saying) ‘that’s not going to work’, rather than the reverse and it’s a letdown.”

Glass is unorthodox for a superhero film. Like Unbreakable, the movie departs from and deconstructs the superhero genre itself and, unlike most films in this category, it is not a caped-crusader caper adapted from a comic book.

The film sets up a showdown between Willis’ character David Dunn, who learnt he was invulnerable in Unbreakable, and McAvoy’s superhuman persona from Split, The Beast.

“This movie will talk about the movie you think you’re going to see and say, ‘I know we’re supposed to go that way but we’re not – isn’t that interesting?’” the director teases.

In an era of ballooning budgets for big action films, one of Shyamalan’s superpowers might be that he makes things relatively cheaply.

“My natural tendencies lead me to this, so why not take advantage of it? I plan everything out and I am a minimalist director. They’re practically plays, so why am I taking all your money?”

“My tendency is not towards excess, that’s not how I tell a story. The eeriness of the sound effect is more powerful than seeing something – it’s that kind of incomplete, insinuative storytelling.”

With Glass, which had a reported production budget of US\$75 million (compare that to 2018’s Avengers: Infinity War, which cost an estimated US\$316 million to US\$400 million), he hopes to find success despite – or perhaps because of – its atypical storyline.

“There are comic-book films I skip because I think I know where they’re headed. So the more original it is, the more power we have – that’s where I think we are now in the marketplace.”

“Certain comic-book movies now made with even a slight variation – they’re African-American leads or a female lead – are popping up.”

With Glass, “it’s a hyper-original movie, but, again, it’s so modestly budgeted that we’re going to be okay”, he says.

“We also have that Unbreakable (reaction) of, like, ‘What is this?’ I think the older version of myself is more comfortable with ‘What is this?’ When I was younger, I wanted acceptance right away.”

(Above, from left) Samuel L. Jackson, James McAvoy and Bruce Willis star in Glass, directed by M. Night Shyamalan (below). PHOTO: THE WALT DISNEY COMPANY



## Massive plot holes, limp action scenes

REVIEW / SUPERHERO THRILLER  
GLASS (PG13)  
129 minutes/Opens today/★★★☆

**The story:** Following the events of Split (2016) and Unbreakable (2000), the three protagonists are now imprisoned by the state in a mental institution. David “The Overseer” Dunn (Bruce Willis), Elijah “Mr Glass” Price (Samuel L. Jackson) and Kevin “The Horde” Crumb (James McAvoy) are in therapy, supervised by Dr Staple (Sarah Paulson).

John Lui

Somewhere in all this self-importance, there is a strong, lean superhero story. The trouble is that writer-director M. Night Shyamalan has a habit of standing in his own way.

Every 15 minutes or so, someone will intone Wikipedia paragraphs about the nature and structure of the superhero versus supervillain arc. There was some of this in Unbreakable, but that heavy-handed, patronising guidance goes into overdrive here.

There are massive plot holes that could have been forgiven if not for the sections that say that unless viewers understand the how and why of comic-book superheroes, they might not “get” the movie.

This tic – the need to lean on an

uber-story to rationalise or talk up the one shown on screen – is a habit that Shyamalan fans know too well and have suffered through.

There is another problem – poorly staged action, which plagued Split (2016) and The Last Airbender (2010). Shyamalan’s live-action adaption of the Nickelodeon series Avatar: The Last Airbender (2005 to 2008).

Shyamalan is gifted in suspense, but he is awful at staging action scenes.

Kudos to him for using only “real” or practical effects though. As Christopher Nolan’s Batman trilogy (2005 to 2012) showed, realistic effects and the superhero format work well together.

Shyamalan’s action scenes – Crumb (McAvoy) lunging, Dunn (Willis) displaying his strength – are confusing or limply edited, and often both.

As the animated feature Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse (showing in cinemas) shows, going meta can be a win for both film-makers and audiences.

The trick is not to make it feel like a lecture, especially when all that foreshadowing sets up expectations for a massive climax – one that, because of the story reminding the viewer of how epic it is, sabotages itself and becomes distinctly underwhelming.

## Top10Movies

### SINGAPORE

- (-) Escape Room
- (1) Aquaman
- (2) Bumblebee
- (3) More Than Blue
- (4) Make It Big Big
- (6) Instant Family
- (7) Master Z: The Ip Man Legacy
- (8) (6) Mary Poppins Returns
- (9) (-) The Mule
- (10) (10) Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse

● Information from Cinematograph Film Exhibitors Association

### UNITED STATES

- (-) The Upside
- (1) Aquaman
- (3) A Dog’s Way Home
- (4) (5) Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse
- (5) (2) Escape Room
- (6) (3) Mary Poppins Returns
- (7) (4) Bumblebee
- (8) (16) On The Basis Of Sex
- (9) (6) The Mule
- (10) (7) Vice

● Information from boxofficemojo.com

## Love in 200 words

This Valentine’s Day, The Straits Times invites you to tell us a love story in miniature

Send us a story about love – true, imagined, funny, sad, yours, anybody’s – in 200 words, 200 being the magic number this Bicentennial year. We will publish the best entries on Feb 10.

- All entries must be 200 words or fewer.
- The Straits Times reserves the right to curate, edit and publish the entries at its discretion.
- Entries should not contain profanity or graphic language.

Send your entry to [stlife@sph.com.sg](mailto:stlife@sph.com.sg) by Jan 31 with “LOVE STORY” in the e-mail subject line, along with the following details:

- Your full name as in your NRIC
- Your date of birth
- Your mobile phone number
- Your e-mail address



Jan 31 with “LOVE STORY” in the e-mail subject line, along with the following details:

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- Your e-mail address

● Information from Cinematograph Film Exhibitors Association

[stlife@sph.com.sg](mailto:stlife@sph.com.sg)

● Glass opens today.

Cancellation of Art Stage Singapore

# Galleries, artists jump in to help display artworks

They are offering their own studios as alternative venues for the works originally planned for Art Stage Singapore

Toh Wen Li

Galleries, artists and even home owners have swooped in to help after the sudden cancellation of Art Stage Singapore yesterday, which left gallery owners, artists and artworks in limbo nine days before the fair was supposed to have begun.

The contemporary art fair was launched in Singapore in 2011 and slated to return from Jan 25 to 27 at the Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre.

But on Wednesday morning, galleries received an e-mail, signed off by Art Stage's founder and president Lorenzo Rudolf, asking them to "cease all preparations for Art Stage Singapore 2019" or reverse them.

In a joint statement by the National Arts Council, Singapore Tourism Board and Economic Development Board, the agencies say they understand the cancellation to be a "commercial decision".

The Art Stage Singapore website listed 45 exhibitors for this year's edition, more than half of whom are based overseas.



Kult Studio & Gallery is renting space to artists affected by the sudden cancellation of Art Stage Singapore. PHOTO: KULT STUDIO & GALLERY

Footfall and sales for the fair had been declining in recent years. At Art Stage Singapore 2018, there were 84 exhibitors, compared with 131 in 2017 and 170 in 2016.

Some people are taking to social media to rally support for "stranded" parties, including via a Facebook group called Art Stage SOS, started by Plural Art Mag yesterday to help affected gallerists

and artists find alternative spaces to display their works.

At press time, the group had more than 100 members.

Some galleries are offering support to ensure that the months of preparation for Art Stage Singapore do not go entirely to waste.

Artist Eugenia Gajardo is opening up her private studio, called The Studio Gallery, to affected artists and

will not ask for a fee or commission.

Asked why she decided to help, the artist, who paid for a 35 sq m booth at the fair and was planning to display 12 of her paintings, says: "I feel the distress myself... I prepared these (works) specially for an international art fair. It was something so special."

Others stepping in to help range from a member of the public offer-

ing her three-bedroom apartment as an exhibition venue to consultancy Asian Art Advisory, which is providing a 5,000 sq ft space for appointment-only exhibitions.

Meanwhile, Singapore-based art commune Gallery and Kult Studio & Gallery are offering space for rent.

Instinct art space had paid a special rate of about \$7,000 for a 35 sq m booth at Art Stage. Founder Yeo Shih Yun had approached Gajah Gallery earlier this week, when rumours about the cancellation of Art Stage Singapore were already circulating.

Gajah Gallery is not charging a fee for the use of its space. However, it will receive a 50 per cent commission for each piece of work sold.

Art Porters Gallery co-founder Guillaume Levy-Lambert says the gallery had planned a solo showcase of paintings by Indonesian artist Naufal Abshar for Art Stage Singapore.

"We want to do everything we can to help stranded galleries - we'll see if we can fit in (artworks from) foreign galleries at our arts space," adds Levy-Lambert, who is already in talks with three galleries from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Israel.

"Our costs and potential loss are only a fraction of what some foreign galleries have at stake."

tohwenli@sph.com.sg

Kevin Hart is an ex-convict who becomes the live-in caregiver of a wealthy quadriplegic played by Bryan Cranston in *The Upside*. PHOTO: GOLDEN VILLAGE



## A different look at Kevin Hart

Alison de Souza  
In Los Angeles

Kevin Hart is still courting controversy over whether or not he will host next month's Oscars, but there is good news for the star this week: His new movie, *The Upside*, topped the American box office last weekend.

The actor and comedian spoke to The Straits Times and other press in Los Angeles about the film in October.

This was two months before the furore sparked by some of his old homophobic jokes and tweets resurfaced, prompting calls for an apology that he refused before resigning as Oscars host. But he recently reigned the storm by suggesting he might reconsider and emcee after all.

But even months ago, while talking about his new film, the 39-year-old, who frequently refers to himself in the third person, seemed acutely sensitive to how he is perceived by fans and critics.

He wants those seeing him in a more serious dramatic role such as this to "really have the shock factor", he declares. "I want people to walk away saying, 'I didn't know Kevin had that in him and he did'."

Opening in Singapore today, *The Upside* is a remake of the 2012 French comedy-drama *Les Intouchables*, which was a hit in France and internationally. Based on a true story, it is about the blossoming friendship between Phillip, a wealthy man with quadriplegia played by Bryan Cranston, and Dell (Hart), the ex-convict he decides to hire as his live-in caregiver.

Hart was one of the top-earning stand-up comics in the United States before launching an equally lucrative career as a comedic actor, starring in films such as *The Ride Along* movies (2014 and 2016) and *Central Intelligence* (2016).

But he had done little dramatic work and felt the need to prove he could.

"That was the reason for taking this film on - I wanted to switch it

up and I wanted to give my fanbase just a different look at the world of Kevin Hart and to see where I consider my talents to be," says the star, who is married to 34-year-old model Eniko Parrish and has three children aged one to 13 from this and a previous marriage.

"And to do that, I said if I have the opportunity to partner some amazing actors and actresses, they're going to help bring that out of me."

He is referring to Cranston, a four-time Emmy winner for his role in the crime drama *Breaking Bad* (2008 to 2013), and Oscar winner Nicole Kidman (*The Hours*, 2002), who plays Phillip's loyal assistant Yvonne.

"I know what I'm capable of, but when you stand with the A plus of the A plus, Bryan and Nicole, you have no choice but to come prepared and come with the expectation of following their lead."

But he had to convince director Neil Burger that he was up to the task.

Burger, 56, admits he was a little

sceptical at first. "Then I went back and studied his work closer and what I discovered was he's a storyteller", says the *Divergent* (2014) and *The Illusionist* (2006) filmmaker.

"And the great thing about comedians playing dramatic roles is they have great timing, which is a big thing."

"Then I met with Kevin and he told me about his background and underprivileged upbringing, and that he knew this character. Then he did the character for me and I was sold."

Hart and Cranston, 62, also threw themselves into research, meeting with quadriplegic patients and their carers to better prepare for their parts.

They came away from the experience with new respect for both.

Cranston, who met three quadriplegics, says that even with varying levels of happiness versus depression, "it's a very arduous and daunting task for them on a day-to-day basis".

"A good support group, that's primarily what makes them pull through. And that there are people who help them day to day is absolutely necessary. The caretaker is the most under-appreciated person involved in this scenario."

While there is some boundary-pushing levity in the film - for instance, in a scene where Dell has to change Phillip's catheter - "I don't think we're making fun of the disability", Burger adds.

"Because Phillip's character at the beginning is actually really depressed, and we don't pull any punches on that, you actually get the studio saying, 'Could you be a little less grim in the beginning?' But no, that's the way it was."

"I think the humour comes because the two men find life again," Burger says.

"Kevin's character brings this mischievous and wildness into Phillip's life and Phillip, to his credit, recognises it."

• *The Upside* opens today.

Telemad

# Reality mixed with fantasy and dark humour



Boon Chan

A cursory glance suggests some similarities between K-dramas *Memories Of The Alhambra* and *Encounter*.

Both feature name stars - Hyun Bin (*Secret Garden*, 2010) and Park Shin-hye (*The Heirs*, 2013) in the former; Song Hye-kyo (*Descendants Of The Sun*, 2016) and Park Bo-gum (*Reply 1988*, 2015) in the latter - and a pivotal exotic location - Spain's Granada, and Cuba respectively.

But selling *Memories Of The Alhambra* as a romantic drama is doing it a disservice. Despite the promotional poster of Hyun and Park gazing at each other, there is very little romance in the first few episodes.

Instead, there is high-stakes corporate intrigue over an augmented reality (AR) mediaeval warrior game with characters that seem to interact so seamlessly with the real world, it makes *Pokémon Go* look like child's play.

One night, Yoo Jin-woo (Hyun), chief executive officer of an investment company, receives a harried phone call from the young man who developed the game, which is set in the Spanish city of Granada, where the palace and fortress complex Alhambra is located.

They arrange to meet at a hostel in Granada, but Jung Se-joo (Park Chan-yeol) never appears.

Jin-woo is impressed with the game and wants to buy it, but soon finds himself literally crossing swords with competitor Cha Hyung-seok (Park Hoon). The two men used to be business partners, but Hyung-seok is now married to Jin-woo's ex-wife, who is pregnant.

Where is Park Shin-hye in all this? She plays the owner, Jung Hee-joo, of the rundown hostel Jin-woo is staying in. The two clash at first, but things change when he realises that she is the older sister of the missing game developer.

Their initial run-ins are romcom-worthy, but instead of a romance, the viewer gets a whole bunch of puzzles.

What has happened to Hee-joo's brother? Is there something nefarious about the game, which events early on suggest? And how have Hyun's cheekbones stayed so sharp over the years?

The show is directed by Ahn Gil-ho (*Rooftop Prince*, 2012) and



written by Song Jae-jung (*W*, 2016). It jumps back and forth in time, which can be a little confusing at times, but by doling out context and new information, the revisited scenes take on a different meaning.

Be warned: Like an addictive game, one keeps wanting to return to *Memories Of The Alhambra* to progress deeper into its mystery, hoping that all will be revealed. Its binge-watch factor is very high.

*Priest* is not quite your usual K-drama offering either.

The first episode throws all the familiar exorcism tropes at the viewer: possessed boy who speaks in a creepy deep voice, levitating child, flickering lights, jump cuts.

But there is more.

The buddy-cop dynamic between older priest Moon Ki-seon (Park Yong-woo from *Handphone*, 2009) and younger priest Oh Soo-min (Yeon Woo-jin from *Judge Vs Judge*, 2017) provides some welcome comic relief, given the dark subject matter here.

The latter's backstory - as a child, he watched his possessed mother fall to her death - is likely to figure prominently as the story progresses.

There is also a medical component here as doctor Ham Eun-ho (Jeong Yu-mi from *Rooftop Prince*) tries to care for possessed patients from a rational health perspective.

There is a bit of the believer-versus-sceptic tussle between Soo-min and her that is reminiscent of Fox Mulder and Dana Scully from the American science-fiction drama series, *The X-Files* (1993 to 2002, 2016 to 2018).

It turns out it takes a village to perform an exorcism.

Apart from the priests, there is a driver/hacker/videographer, a gallery owner who can, say, help to procure objects such as a powerful cross, and a cop on the cusp of retirement keeping things under the radar.

Shades of sci-fi action film *Inception* (2010) creep into a scenario where Soo-min has to attempt an exorcism by delving into the subconscious of a possessed person.

Now that is really asking the viewer to take a leap of faith.

bchan@sph.com.sg



Priest's Park Yong-woo and Yeon Woo-jin (both above).

## VIEW IT / *MEMORIES OF THE ALHAMBRA*

Netflix

★★★★★

## PRIEST

Viu

★★★☆☆

## Charting the birth and boom of the Internet

**Alison de Souza**  
In Los Angeles

Remember Netscape, that early contender in the first Internet browser wars?

Ms Arianna Huffington does.

Founder of the pioneering news and blog site The Huffington Post, she knew many of the key players in the boom and bust of 1990s Silicon Valley.

This is why the media maven is an executive producer on a new television show, *Valley Of The Boom*, about the gold-rush fervour of the time.

A six-part limited series airing on Sundays at 10pm on National Geographic (Singtel TV Channel 201 and StarHub TV Channel 411, and streaming on Fox+), it combines a scripted drama starring American actor Bradley Whitford and documentary-style interviews with figures from the early days of the dot.com revolution.

Speaking to The Straits Times and other press in Los Angeles last year, Ms Huffington, 68, says what the show "captures so brilliantly at this moment of the birth of the Internet is how dramatically different it was

than it is now, when we've all become much more sceptical, much more conscious of all the unintended consequences of addiction to social media and the constant interruptions and notifications".

"The mood you're going to see here is a mood of idealism, triumphalism. It was expected to basically change the world and everybody wanted to be on the Internet train even if they had no clue where that train was going," says the entrepreneur, who left The Huffington Post in 2016 to launch another start-up, the health and wellness information company Thrive Global.

Central to the story is Mr James Barksdale, who was chief executive officer of the company that developed Netscape - the browser that dominated the market until Microsoft's Internet Explorer and others edged it out.

His experience encapsulates the highs and lows of that period and Whitford, star of the political drama series *The West Wing* (1999 to 2006), does an amazing job playing him, Ms Huffington says.

"He captures someone I have known for many years - you see his dry wit, his brilliance and how central he was to Netscape."

Whitford, 59, describes the series as kind of an origin story of the Internet, which "was supposed to bring us together and help us communicate", but which the viewer now knows, with hindsight, may be a double-edged sword.

And the present day is an interesting time for this story because there is an adjustment to how people are viewing the online world, the actor notes. "Is the Internet going to own us? Are we going to be at the mercy of it? Is it leading to more life or more Internet?"

The way Microsoft fought to destroy Netscape also foreshadows

other major developments, Ms Huffington says.

"We see some of the issues that are at the forefront of the conversation now, like monopolies versus more open source or the importance of market share. And the way that technology moves so fast today that the law cannot keep up with it."

This is why the show will prove instructive even though it deals with long-forgotten chapters from the early days of the Internet.

Ms Huffington says: "Because I'm so interested in the Internet 3.0 era that we're in now and all the unintended consequences, I felt that by

understanding the origin, we will find better ways to deal with the damage that's being done right now - like the rise in depression and anxiety among girls addicted to social media, and how much harder it is to distinguish between facts and fiction."

"All that stuff we are dealing with now was begun in another era that never really saw or foretold what was coming."

• *Valley Of The Boom* airs on Sundays at 10pm on National Geographic (Singtel TV Channel 201 and StarHub TV Channel 411) and also streams on Fox+.



Media maven Arianna Huffington (above) is an executive producer of *Valley Of The Boom*, which stars Bradley Whitford (left). PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



Some BTS fans have raised a four-figure sum to dress up a tour bus with pictures of the band members on both sides. The bus will pass by popular local venues on the day of the concert.

# BTS Army are ready to roll

**Fans of the South Korean boyband go all out to make sure their idols get a warm welcome on Saturday**

Jan Lee and Desiree Loh

Recruitment consultant Sarah Lee was enlisted into the Army in 2015. This is not the Singapore Armed Forces, but a name for fans of the juggernaut South Korean boyband BTS, who will perform in Singapore on Saturday.

The 28-year-old and her younger sister Sandra Lee, a 26-year-old finance administrator at a shipping firm, own a plethora of BTS-related merchandise – such as albums, concert DVDs, photo collections and limited-edition Christmas cards.

Both sisters have also travelled overseas to watch the boyband perform in various locations, with the elder Ms Lee having chalked up 10 trips since 2015 to countries such as Japan, South Korea and Thailand

to watch the group perform live. In all, she has spent about \$30,000 on BTS-related trips, activities and merchandise in the past three years.

The younger Ms Lee says: "We still have regular savings because it's important to make sure our lives are in order before we chase after our 'boys'."

Ms Sarah Lee adds: "I just spend less on other things, such as clothes."

In October last year, the sisters, who have practised K-pop dance for about three years, also founded a BTS dance crew named El Mariachi – after the lyrics of the group's 2018 release, Airplane Pt. 2.

The group has about 15 members and focuses on teaching BTS choreography.

It meets every Sunday and Monday for physical training and choreographed practices.

The dance crew is just one example of the many activities initiated by the Army for the seven-member band and its fanbase here.

Ms Angel Yuan, 20, a polytechnic student, is organising a two-day event at Korean cafe PlusEighttwo in Rendezvous Gallery on March 3 and 4 to celebrate BTS member

Suga's birthday, which falls on March 9.

Fans who attend the event and buy a drink will receive a cup sleeve with a BTS-related design on it, which she commissioned an artist to create.

Ms Yuan says: "I just want to be with other fans to celebrate his birthday and we can all enjoy ourselves together."

Similar events have also been organised for other members of BTS. Last December, about 20 fans aged 16 to 18 chipped in \$800 to organise a birthday event for member V, whose real name is Kim Tae-hyung.

Sixteen-year-old student Lau Wei Ling, who was involved in organising the event, says: "It was to promote more awareness of BTS and for fans to meet other friends."

In the lead-up to BTS' sold-out concert at the National Stadium on Saturday, some fans have even pooled together resources to dress up a tour bus with pictures of the band members on a purple backdrop.

The project is titled Borahae, a term which literally translates to "I purr you" and signifies trust and love among the band and its fans.

An 18-year-old student who

organised the project and wants to be known only as Ms Hana I.S., said 27 fans aged between 18 and 35 contributed to a four-figure sum for the bus.

She says: "The bus will pass by popular and busy places such as Orchard Road, Bugis and Suntec City. On the day of the concert, it will also pass by the National Stadium."

Meanwhile, undergraduate Gigi Chow, 22, has come up with a plan to enhance audience interaction during member Suga's solo performance of his song, Seesaw (2018).

Aided by 166 fans she recruited on Twitter, she aims to share with as many concertgoers as possible a self-designed poster of the romanticised lyrics of Seesaw for Suga's singing segment.

She said the volunteers will be spread throughout the various seating categories in the stadium and they will share the poster using Apple's file-sharing service, AirDrop.

Ms Chow came up with the idea after watching clips of the rapper's solo performance during the North

American leg of the tour last year.

When Suga paused to let the audience sing along towards the end of his song, many fans struggled with the lyrics because the entire verse was in Korean, she said.

After she secured tickets to the group's gig, she took it upon herself to try to prevent such an incident from happening here.

"There is nothing more rewarding for artists than knowing that their work is appreciated and loved, so we're aiming for the Army to learn the lyrics and be able to sing along."

While some may baulk at the time, effort and money BTS fans spend on their idols, members of the Army are unfazed.

Ms Sarah Lee says: "I know some people might say it's a waste of time and money, but ultimately, BTS make me happy."

"I'm motivated to be a better person because of them."

janlee@sph.com.sg

desloh@sph.com.sg



The collection of BTS-related merchandise belonging to sisters Sarah and Sandra Lee. PHOTOS: HANA I.S., SARAH LEE

## Obituary

### Carol Channing played Dolly more than 4,500 times

**NEW YORK** • Carol Channing, whose incandescent performances as the gold-digging Lorelei Lee in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes and the matchmaker Dolly Gallagher Levi in Hello, Dolly! made her a Broadway legend, died on Tuesday at her home in Rancho Mirage, California. She was 97.

Her death was confirmed by her publicist, Mr B. Harlan Boll, in a telephone interview. She had suffered two strokes during the past year, he said.

Channing was bringing audiences to their feet night after night in a revival of Hello, Dolly! when she was 74 – appearing at the top of the staircase singing: "Wow, wow, wow, fellas! Look at the old girl now, fellas."

She was resplendent in her scarlet gown and jewels, her platinum hair crowned with red plumage.

Ten years later, she was still getting applause, this time for a cabaret act. Nine years after that, just a few days before her 93rd birthday, she appeared at Town Hall in Manhattan as part of a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the night Hello, Dolly! opened.

"Performing is the only excuse for my existence," she said during

her last Broadway appearance, in the 1995 revival of Hello, Dolly. "What can be better than this?"

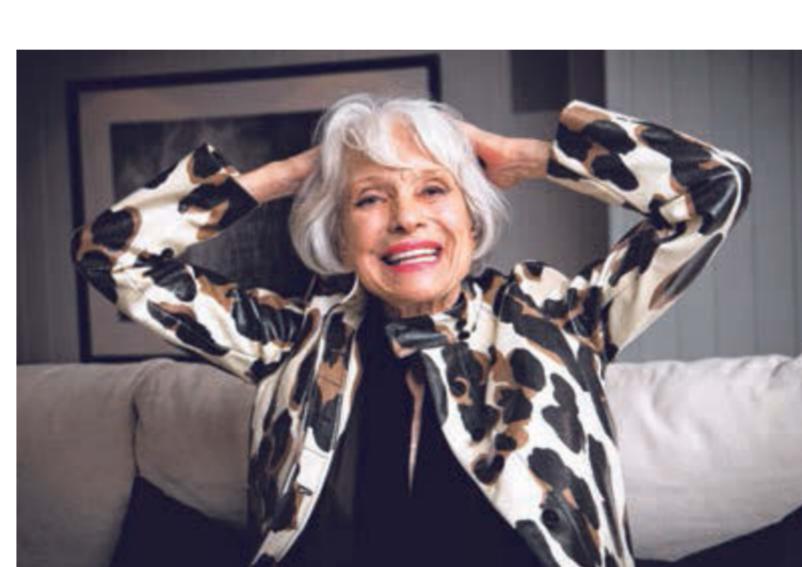
Channing was one of the most recognisable presences in the theatre world. Her tousled hairdo, headlight-sized eyes and exaggerated mouth were the subject of countless caricatures.

Her voice, gravel-toned and capable of sinking to subterranean levels, was as distinctive as her appearance. When she sang a song in her exaggerated growl, it belonged to her forever. Only jazz legend Louis Armstrong's growling rendition of Hello, Dolly! was a match for hers.

The tall, flamboyant Channing became a Broadway star at the Ziegfeld Theatre on Dec 8, 1949. That was the opening night of Gentleman Prefer Blondes, a musical based on playwright Anita Loos' bestseller of the 1920s, with music by Jule Styne, lyrics by Leo Robin and choreography by Agnes de Mille.

Channing starred as the flapper Lorelei Lee. Her stardom was assured when she sang Lorelei's anthem, Diamonds Are A Girl's Best Friend.

Time magazine summed up her



Carol Channing was known for her performances in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes and Hello, Dolly!. PHOTO: NYTIMES

performance: "Perhaps once in a decade, a nova explodes above the Great White Way with enough brilliance to re-illumine the whole gaudy legend of show business."

Brooks Atkinson, the drama critic of The New York Times, hailed her Lorelei Lee as "the most fabulous comic creation of this dreary period in history".

Hello, Dolly!, with a score by Jerry Herman, opened at the St James Theatre on Jan 16, 1964 and received ecstatic reviews.

It went on to win 10 Tony Awards, including one for Channing as Best Actress In A Musical.

She remained active well into her 80s. Reviewing her performance at Feinstein's at the Regency in 2005, Stephen Holden of The Times wrote: "Although substantially diminished in power, Channing's blend of unbridled optimism and ferocious vitality is still a primal show-business force field. At 84, she personifies the adult child as natural showoff and clown, brimming with curiosity and humour, accentuating the positive."

Her first two marriages, to Theodore Naidish, a writer, and Alexander Carson, a professional football player, ended in divorce.

She had a son, Channing, by her second husband. He was later adopted by her third husband, television producer Charles Lowe.

Channing and Lowe were married in 1956, but were estranged at the time of Lowe's death in 1999.

In 2003, she married Harry Kullijian, who had been her junior high-school sweetheart. He died in December 2011. She is survived by her son.

She once said that she hoped to die like David Burns, her original co-star in Hello, Dolly!, who got a big laugh in 1971 in a tryout of the musical, 70 Girls 70, in Philadelphia, then keeled over on stage while the laugh continued.

She said: "The audience didn't know there was anything wrong, you see. He died hearing the laughter build. I can't think of a better way to go." NYTIMES

# Writing songs to find strength

**Danish band Lukas Graham's frontman channels his life experiences, feelings and ambitions into his songs**

**Anjali Raguraman**

Danish pop-soul trio Lukas Graham's breakout song 7 Years was one of the top 10 best-selling tracks worldwide in 2016. It garnered three Grammy nominations – for Record of the Year, Song of the Year and Best Pop Duo/Group Performance.

For a track that has received so much attention around the globe, it started out as something very personal. Frontman Lukas Graham Forchhammer, after whom the band are named, wrote the lullaby-like, piano-driven tune in the wake of his father's death. It looks back on Forchhammer's own life and

looks ahead to when he is 60.

The main songwriter of the group says: "It's really cathartic, where instead of going to a psychiatrist, you can write down your feelings, your thoughts and your ambitions. I find a lot of strength in it."

The unassuming 30-year-old was in Singapore for the first time as part of a solo promotional trip in Asia.

He was speaking to The Straits Times at The Capitol Kempinski Hotel Singapore before a private showcase for more than 100 fans and media at M Social Singapore hotel last Friday.

Since the success of 7 Years, Forchhammer has had plenty more life experiences to draw on, includ-

ing the birth of his now two-year-old daughter Viola, which has had a profound effect on him.

He feels that becoming a father has altered him.

The musician grew up in the anarchist commune of Freetown Christiania in Copenhagen. He recalls living in a house with no toilet until he was six years old in what he describes as "one of the poorest areas in my country".

He adds: "I grew up among a lot of hard men. Many of the guys are in jail now and I think that affected me in that I was a little bit closed off in some of the feelings I had."

But things changed when Viola came along.

"I could soften up and let go of a

lot of regrets, anger and frustrations...

"I re-prioritised a lot of things. Work wasn't the most important thing in my life anymore. I wasn't the most important thing in my life anymore," he says.

One of the songs written for his long-time girlfriend Marie-Louise Petersen Schwartz and daughter, Love Someone, has crossed 100 million streams on YouTube. The song is off Lukas Graham's latest record, The Purple Album, which was released in October.

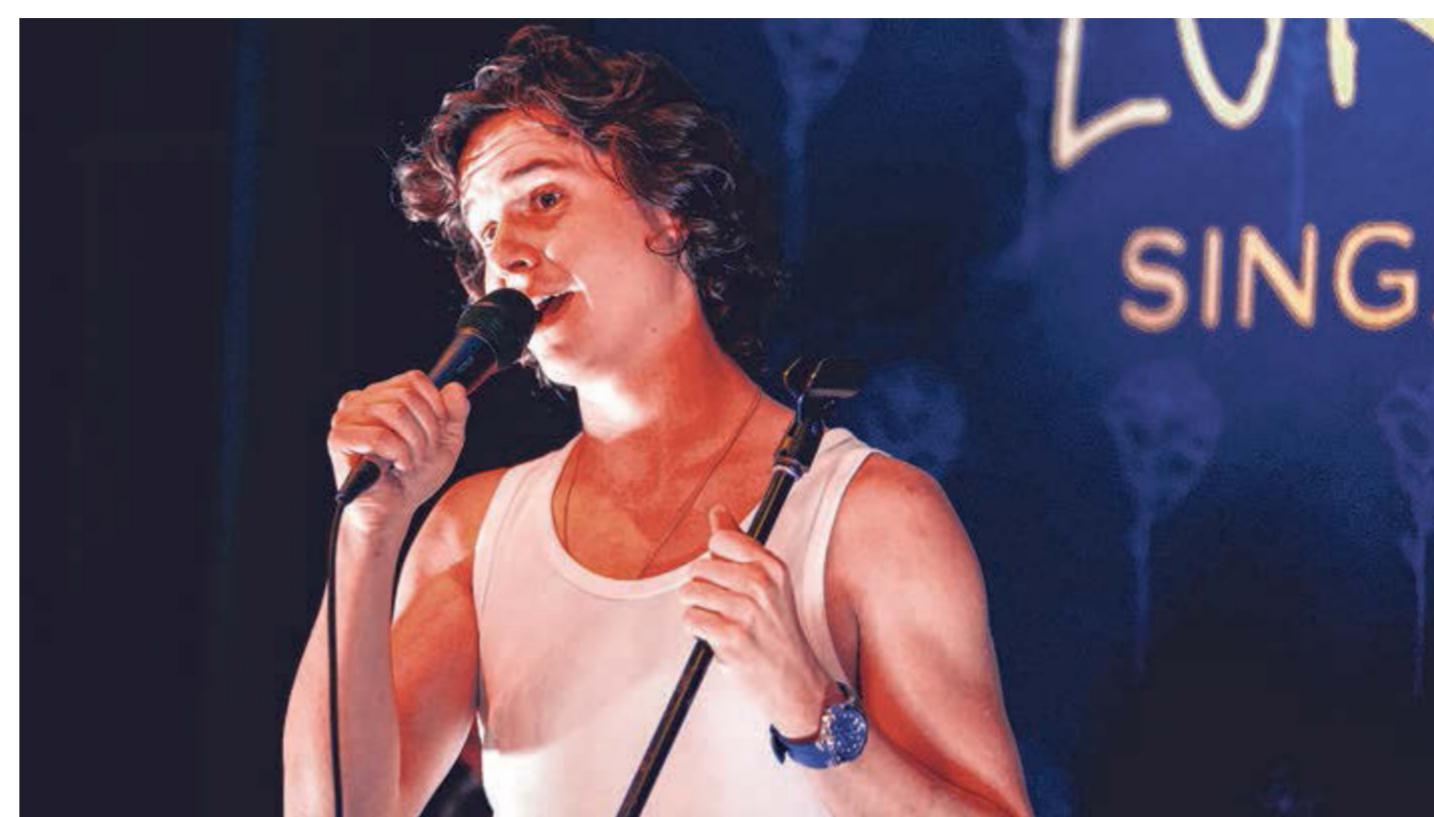
The group's accolades include New Danish Name of the Year at the Danish Music Awards in 2012 and Best Danish Act at the MTV Europe Music Awards in 2015.

To Forchhammer though, such measures of success are not the most important thing.

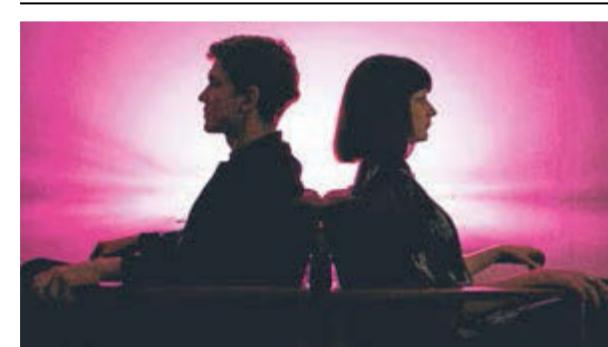
He says: "In 20 years, I won't be looking back on the fact that I won an award. It will be that I performed at the Grammys and my mum saw it and my girlfriend was there; that I played at Madison Square Garden in New York and the Staples Center in Los Angeles because that was a childhood dream of mine; that I played at Wembley Stadium in London with 85,000 people singing 7 Years back so loud, I couldn't hear myself."

"That's the stuff I want to remember."

anjali@spph.com.sg



Singer Lukas Graham Forchhammer says the birth of his daughter Viola, now two years old, helped him re-prioritise his life.  
PHOTO: WARNER MUSIC SINGAPORE



You Tell Me comprise Peter Brewis and Sarah Hayes.  
PHOTOS: MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

## Sit back and relish the spirit of freedom

**INDIE ROCK/ART POP**  
**YOUTELLME**  
You Tell Me  
Memphis Industries  
★★★★

**Yeow Kai Chai**

Last year, singer Tracyanne Campbell of Scottish band Camera Obscura joined hands with Bristol musician Danny Coughlan aka Crybaby for a surprise duet record simply titled Tracyanne & Danny.

You Tell Me has a similar Scottish-English set-up, with Sarah Hayes, the flautist from the Glaswegian orchestral pop collective Admiral Fallow, paired up with Peter Brewis, the Sunderland composer and instrumentalist from Mercury Prize-nominated art-rockers Field Music.

The two first met and bonded at a Kate Bush tribute concert in 2016 and their common adoration for the English singer-songwriter bears prodigious fruits in their debut album as You Tell Me.

Relish the spirit of freedom and experimentation through the 11 tracks, which are engaged in a communication between equal minds. "Most of the songs seemed to be conversations, be conversational or about talking or not talking," says Brewis in the press statement, describing the record as "dual-personal".

Lead-off single Invisible Ink exemplifies their magpie sensibility, expert musicianship and respect for each other. The absence of reverb is unusual in these days of overproduction, but here, it means you appreciate the subtle composition of sounds – crystalline and precise. It's a breezy, beautifully tactile art-pop doozy, reminding one of someone smart and intuitive, with its intricate layering of percussion and synths held together with an old-school computer-game loop.

Springburn starts off as a pretty chamber pop ballad, recalling the early days of indie-folk troubadours Sufjan Stevens and even Joanna Newsom, with its bucolic winds and ivories. "Heard you were in the hospital and might not be the same," Hayes sings, crisp and clear, until the punch line comes: "You'd laugh in disbelief if I told you the impact that you made."

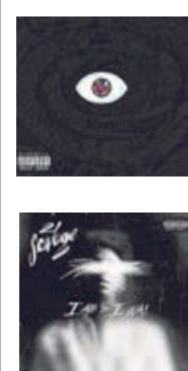
These are deeply empathetic dialogues haunted by vagaries of the human heart.

Hayes and Brewis harmonise on Get Out Of The Room, a febrile, art-pop middle finger with the edgy funk rhythms of, say, 1980s new wave band Talking Heads, while the orchestral intro of Foreign Parts sweeps you into worldwide romance.

Throughout, they display an incredible mastery of pace and emotional shading. No Hurry begins soft and slow, with pinched vocals, before piano arpeggios give way to expansive 1970s-styled prog-rock riffs, before returning to quieter waters.

It's a whirlwind tour throughout modern rock and pop, taking detours, meeting idols and having a tryst or two. You don't quite know the itinerary from the offset, but that's okay – you know you're in great company.

## Bad Bunny and 21 Savage star on their latest albums



**LATIN TRAP/HIP-HOP/REGGAETON X100PRE**  
Bad Bunny  
Rimas  
★★★★★

**HIP-HOP IAM I WAS**  
21 Savage  
Epic/Slaughter Gang  
★★★★★

**Eddino Abdul Hadi**

Last year, Puerto Rican trap and reggaeton singer Bad Bunny broke out in a big way, making the jump from the Latin pop charts to the mainstream ones.

In true modern fashion, he did it not by amassing his own solo hits, but by featuring on chart-toppers by other pop stars, most prominently on chart-topper I Like It with Cardi B and J. Balvin.

With debut album X100PRE, the title of which is a stylised way of spelling "forever" in Spanish, the 24-year-old comes into his own.

Sure, there are heavy hitters who collaborate with him, such as Drake on the Top 5 hit Mia and marquee electronic producer Diplo on trap track 200 MPH.

But on the whole, Bad Bunny takes centre stage, even shouldering production duties on tracks such as synth-heavy Otra Noche En Miami (Another Night In Miami), throwback track Como Antes (Like Before) and the perky Estamos Bien (We Are Good).

The album testifies to his versatility and displays the breadth of genres covered on his previously released singles.

On Caro, the swagger in the early verses gives way to a tender and full-blown ballad featuring guest vocals from fellow Puerto Rican



Despite roping in some big-name collaborators, Puerto Rican trap and reggaeton singer Bad Bunny (left) and Georgian rapper 21 Savage (right) take centre stage on their albums. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

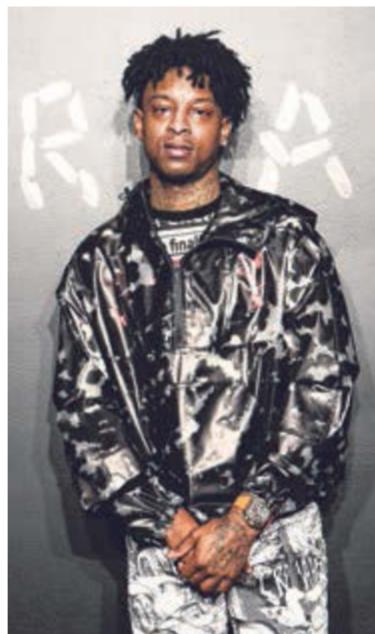
Ricky Martin.

There are a few surprises too – the driving guitars on Tenemos Que Hablar (We Have To Talk), for example, veer into pop-punk and indie rock while La Romana is a seamless and intriguing meld of trap and dembow.

Like Bad Bunny, Georgian rapper 21 Savage also found much success as a collaborator in the past year, most notably featuring in Post Malone's Rockstar, a song nominated for both Record of the Year and Best Rap/Sung Performance in the upcoming Grammy Awards.

It is not surprising that he piles on the star cameos in his sophomore album I Am >1 Was, a No. 1 chart-topper on Billboard, but what makes it interesting is that his high-profile collaborators are not credited in the titles.

But they are there. Fellow rapper J. Cole gets a whole verse and an



interlude on opening track A Lot, a vivid number that sees 21 Savage ruminate on his turbulent past, referencing the murders of his brother and best friend as well as the experience of getting shot six times on his 21st birthday.

Malone sings the earworm of a chorus on the somewhat wistful All My Friends, rap stars Migos' Offset raps on braggadocio track 1.5 while multi-hyphenate Childish Gambino drops cautionary verses on Monster.

Still, there is no doubt that 21 Savage is the star of the show and that his style can be pretty dynamic.

4L and Gun Smoke are legitimate bangers, Out For The Night shines with its soulful guitars, courtesy of a sample from Carlos Santana's Samba Pa Ti (1970), and Pad Lock is a genuinely touching track in which he details his tumultuous upbringing.

## Music Charts

### APPLE MUSIC

- (1) Thank U, Next – Ariana Grande
- (2) Everything I Need – Skylar Grey
- (3) (2) A Kind Of Sorrow – A-lin
- (4) (5) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse) – Post Malone and Swae Lee
- (5) (6) Without Me – Halsey
- (6) (4) Solo – Jennie
- (7) (10) Sweet But Psycho – Ava Max
- (8) (9) Love Someone – Lukas Graham
- (9) (7) Happier – Marshmello & Bastille
- (10) (8) Ddu-Du Ddu-Du – Blackpink

• For the week of Jan 16 in Singapore

### SPOTIFY SINGAPORE

- (2) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse) – Post Malone and Swae Lee
- (1) Thank U, Next – Ariana Grande
- (3) (3) A Kind Of Sorrow – A-lin
- (4) (4) Without Me – Halsey
- (5) (5) Solo – Jennie
- (6) (6) Sweet But Psycho – Ava Max
- (7) (7) Way Back Home – Shaun, Conor Maynard and Sam Feldt
- (8) (8) Everything I Need – Skylar Grey
- (9) (9) Saturday Nights – Khalid
- (10) (10) Dancing With A Stranger – Sam Smith and Normani

• For the week ending Jan 16

### BILLBOARD

- (3) Sunflower (Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse) – Post Malone and Swae Lee
- (1) (1) Without Me – Halsey
- (2) Thank U, Next – Ariana Grande
- (4) (4) Sicko Mode – Travis Scott
- (5) (5) High Hopes – Panic! At The Disco
- (6) (6) Happier – Marshmello and Bastille
- (7) (7) Girls Like You – Maroon 5 featuring Cardi B
- (8) (8) Drip Too Hard – Lil Baby and Gunna
- (9) (9) Eastside – Benny Blanco, Halsey and Khalid
- (10) (10) Zeze – Kodak Black featuring Travis Scott and Offset

• For the week of Jan 19

### HIT FM

- (2) Ugly Beauty – Jolin Tsai
- (1) The Wait – Tanya Chua
- (20) Have You Ever Thought About Me – Wang Bowen
- (16) But It Loves This World – Zhou Shen
- (7) The Time Keeper – Fuying and Sam
- (6) Is It Okay To Like You – Van Ness Wu
- (17) Forever Young – Eve Ai
- (5) Resurgence – JJ Lin
- (9) Core – Sandy Lam
- (13) The Cafe Of Lost Youth – Cyndi Wang

• For the week ending Jan 6

## Bach album both spiritual and vivacious



**CLASSICAL BACH TRIOS**  
Yo-Yo Ma, Chris Thile and Edgar Meyer  
Nonesuch 7559-79392-0  
★★★★★

**Chang Tou Liang**

The trio of cellist Yo-Yo Ma, mandolinist Chris Thile and bassist Edgar Meyer make no pretensions about the authenticity of their album of music by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). All the pieces are co-written arrangements for their peculiar

combination of instruments. The performances, however, sound unusually idiomatic, as if contemporary with the Baroque period itself.

Ma and Thile alternate between and share the melodic lines while Meyer provides the just-as-vital backing, with much counterpoint in between. Thus, works such as the Trio Sonata No. 6 In G Major (BWV.530, originally for organ) and Sonata In G Minor (BWV.1029, for viola da gamba and keyboard) – the two longest pieces and both in three movements – make for excellent showcases.

Also significant is the Prelude

and Fugue In E Minor (BWV.548, for organ), known as "The Wedge" because of the widening intervals in its fugue, which receives an absorbing performance despite sounding quite different from the original.

More familiar are the Chorale Preludes Wachet Auf (Sleepers Awake), Ich Ruft Zu Dir (I Call To Thee) and Erbarme Dich Mein (Have Mercy On Me), as well as selections from The Well-Tempered Clavier and The Art Of Fugue.

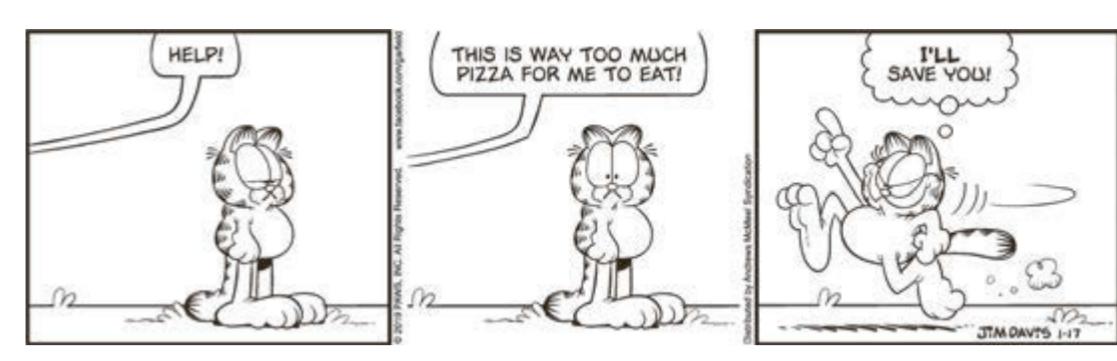
Both spiritual and vivacious, this album yet again demonstrates the timelessness of Bach.

## Comics

## BABY BLUES



## GARFIELD



## Free to air

## CHANNEL 5

## AM

6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)

7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)

9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)

10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)

11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)

## PM

12.00 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)

12.30 Secret Meat Business (IE)

1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)

1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)

2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)

2.30 On The Red Dot - Old Enough! (CC) (CA)

3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

4.00 Meet The MP (HD) (PG) (SC)

4.30 America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (V)

5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)

6.30 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)

7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)

7.30 America's Got Talent: The Champions (PG) (V)

8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)

9.00 News 5 (HD)

9.30 Talking Point 2018 (HD) (CA)

10.00 The Brave (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)

11.00 NCIS 14 (HD) (PG13) (D)

## AM

12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)

12.30 Whacked Out Sports (PG) (V)

12.50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)

1.40 This Is Us (HD) (PG13) (D)

2.30 Grimm 5 (HD) (PG13) (D)

3.20 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)

3.45 Martha Bakes 6 (IE)

4.10 Secret Meat Business (IE)

4.40 Films & Stars (PG) (V)

5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

## CHANNEL 8

## AM

6.00 Golden Age Talentime (CC) (V)

7.00 Sidewalk Scientist (IE)

7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)

8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)

9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)

9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)

10.00 Fruit, Veggies & Me 2 (CC) (IE)

10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)

## PM

12.30 JML Home Shopping (Infomercial)

1.00 News 8 At One (HD)

1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)

2.00 Little Counsellor (HD) (S)

2.30 Your Hand In Mine (HD) (CC) (D)

3.30 Golden Melody (V)

4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)

5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)

6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (CA)

7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)

8.00 Top 10 Singapore (CC) (IE)

9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)

10.00 News Tonight (HD)

10.30 Focus (CC) (CA)

11.00 Princess Agents (PG13) (D)

## AM

12.00 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)

1.00 Chef Apprentice (V)

2.00 A Time To Dance (D)

4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

## CHANNEL U

## PM

3.00 Unique Lodging (CC) (IE)

4.00 The Food Detectives (IE)

4.30 The Work Goes On (IE)

5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)

6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)

7.00 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)

9.00 World Food (CC) (IE)

10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG) (CC) (D)

11.00 News Tonight

11.30 World Food (CC) (IE)

## AM

12.30 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)

2.30 Close

## CNA

## AM

6.00 Singapore Tonight

7.00 First Look Asia

9.00 Asia Business First

## 10.02 Real Deal

11.00 News Now

## PM

1.02 Champions For Change

2.00 News Now

4.02 Real Deal

5.00 News Now

7.02 Champions For Change (CC)

8.00 Primetime Asia

9.02 Insight

10.00 Singapore Tonight

11.02 Champions For Change

## AM

12.00 News Now

12.30 Power List Asia 6

1.02 Insight

2.00 News Now

2.30 The Successors 5

## AM

12.00 News Now

4.00 News Now

4.30 Millionaire Minds

5.02 Insight

## VASANTHAM

## PM

3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)

3.30 Azhagiya Snehithi 2 (IE)

4.00 Sundaram Kudumbathinar (HD) (D)

4.30 Enna Nadakuthu 6 (HD) (V)

5.30 Motu Patlu 3 (S)

6.00 Ishq Ka Rang Safed (PG) (D) (Hindi)

7.00 Konjam Sor Konjam 2 (Cul)

7.30 Mellu Thiranthathu Kathavu 3 (PG) (CC) (D)

8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)

8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)

9.00 Kanavu Meipada 2 (CC) (IE)

10.00 Routhiram (PG13) (CC) (D)

10.30 Bayam (PG) (CC) (D)

11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3 (V)

11.30 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)

## AM

12.00 Close

## OKTO

## AM

9.00 Twirlywoos (P)

9.30 Teddies (P)

10.00 Doki (P)

10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)

11.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)

11.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)

12.00 Close

1.30 Twirlywoos (P)

2.00 Doki (P)

2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)

3.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)

3.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)

4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)

4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate

Dinosaurs (S)

5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)

5.30 Grizzly & The Lemmings (S)

6.00 The Lion Guard (S)

6.30 Fableicious (HD) (S)

7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (S)

7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)

8.00 Star Wars Rebels (HD) (CC) (S)

8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)

9.00 BWF Grand Prix - Scottish Open 2018 (Sports)

11.10 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)

12.00 Close

## SURIYA

## PM

4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)

5.00 Hilang Kasih Di Sarajevo (PG) (CC) (D)

6.00 Kisah Kita (CC) (S)

# Alicia Keys to host Grammys



LOS ANGELES • American singer and songwriter Alicia Keys (left) will host the Grammy Awards next month, she announced on Tuesday, one year after the gala came under fire over diversity concerns.

Keys – herself a 15-time Grammy winner – will be the emcee for music's biggest night, which this year features a diverse slate of women and hip-hop artists as leading contenders.

"I know what it feels like to be on that stage and I know what it feels like to be proud of the work that you've put in and to be recognised for it," she said in a video posted on social media.

"I feel like it's the perfect opportunity for me to give the light back and lift people up – especially all the young women that are nominated. To me, it feels like sister vibes."

She replaces James Corden, the British late-night show comedian who has hosted the awards the past two years.

Since releasing her blockbuster album *Songs In A Minor* in 2001, the classically trained pianist has sold more than 30 million records and become a successful film, television and Broadway producer.

Her appointment as Grammy host comes after the Recording Academy – which organises the event – faced backlash that the show is consistently too male and too white.

Academy head Neil Portnow said in May last year he would step aside when his contract expires later this year, after he triggered outrage for saying women artists should "step up".

"A dynamic artist with the rare combination of groundbreaking talent and passion for her craft, Alicia Keys is the perfect choice as host for our show," he said.

Rap superstar Kendrick Lamar is leading the Grammy pack with eight nominations.

Women performers also boast a heavy presence in top categories. Rapper Cardi B, pop diva Lady Gaga and folk-rock singer Brandi Carlile all nabbed key nominations for the show, which will take place on Feb 10 in Los Angeles. AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

## Cranberries single marks O'Riordan's death anniversary

LONDON • Irish band The Cranberries released the first song of its final album on Tuesday, exactly one year after lead singer Dolores O'Riordan was found drowned in a London hotel bathtub.

The band dropped the new track ahead of the April release of their eighth and last album *In the End*, after which the rock group – best known for 1990s hits including *Zombie*, *Linger* and *Dreams* – will split after three decades together.

Band members Noel Hogan, Mike Hogan and Fergal Lawler finished the 11-song album using demo vocals O'Riordan completed in December 2017, they said on Instagram.

"We remembered how Dolores had been so energised by the prospect of making this record and getting back out on the road to play the songs live, and realised that the most meaningful thing to do was to finish the album we had started with her," the group said. "It was a very emotional process... Knowing that we would never get to play these songs live made it even more difficult." But "we felt that this is what she would want".

The lead single has an unmistakable Cranberries vibe, a sorrowful but moving track that features O'Riordan repeating the eerily prescient lyric "It's all over now".

The group are releasing the music with approval from the family of O'Riordan, who died aged 46. A London coroner ruled that she had died from accidental drowning due to intoxication and found no evidence of injuries or self-harm.

"I can't think of a more fitting way to commemorate the first anniversary of Dolores' passing and to celebrate her life than to announce to the world the release of her final album with the band," the singer's mother Eileen O'Riordan said. AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

### On social media



**TAKING THE AGEING CHALLENGE:** How much do celebrities age in 10 years? Apparently not much, if one goes by the photos seen on the latest social media fad. The so-called #10YearChallenge gets participants to post two photos – one taken recently and another taken 10 years ago – side by side on their social media accounts.

The challenge, also known as #HowHardDidAgingHitYou and #GlowUp, showed the years have not been too hard on celebrities and some have "glowed up".

**Jessica Biel (above):** The actress, 36, wrote on Instagram: "What a difference ten years can make. Although I do still have a lot of (heart emoji) for my tan lines, hoops and blonde days..." Well, fans certainly cannot see the difference 10 years have made, judging from these two photos.

**Ryan Seacrest (left, above):** According to the American Idol host, 44, he almost did not age "when time and hair product are on your side".

He also posted a childhood photo of himself with big glasses and braces.

**Dennis Chew (left):** The local DJ-actor-host, 45, went one up by posting a recent photo and one taken 20 years ago.

His reason? "Have to do more than #10yearchallenge or else really no difference," according to his caption on Instagram.

## Rihanna sues dad over use of Fenty brand

LOS ANGELES • Rihanna (right) has sued her father for trading on her Fenty brand name and suggesting that a business venture he set up in 2017 is associated with her.

The Diamonds singer, whose full name is Robyn Rihanna Fenty, filed a lawsuit in American federal court in Los Angeles on Tuesday, accusing Mr Ronald Fenty and two business partners of fraud and false advertising over his Fenty Entertainment talent and production company.

The Barbados-born Rihanna, who uses the Fenty trademark to sell cosmetics, lingerie and sneak-

ers, asked the court for an injunction to stop her father using the Fenty name and an unspecified amount of damages.

The lawsuit said Rihanna had "absolutely no affiliation" with Fenty Entertainment and yet the company was misappropriating her name and misrepresenting itself as being affiliated with her.

In one instance, Fenty Entertainment accepted a 2017 offer by a

third party for Rihanna to perform 15 shows in Latin America for US\$15 million (\$20.3 million), the lawsuit said.

In another, Fenty Entertainment falsely implied that the singer was involved in a boutique hotel project, it added.

The lawsuit said that despite having repeatedly been told they have no authority to use her name, the Fenty trademark or speak on her behalf, Mr Fenty and his business partners had continued to misrepresent an affiliation with her.

Fenty Entertainment could not be reached for comment. REUTERS

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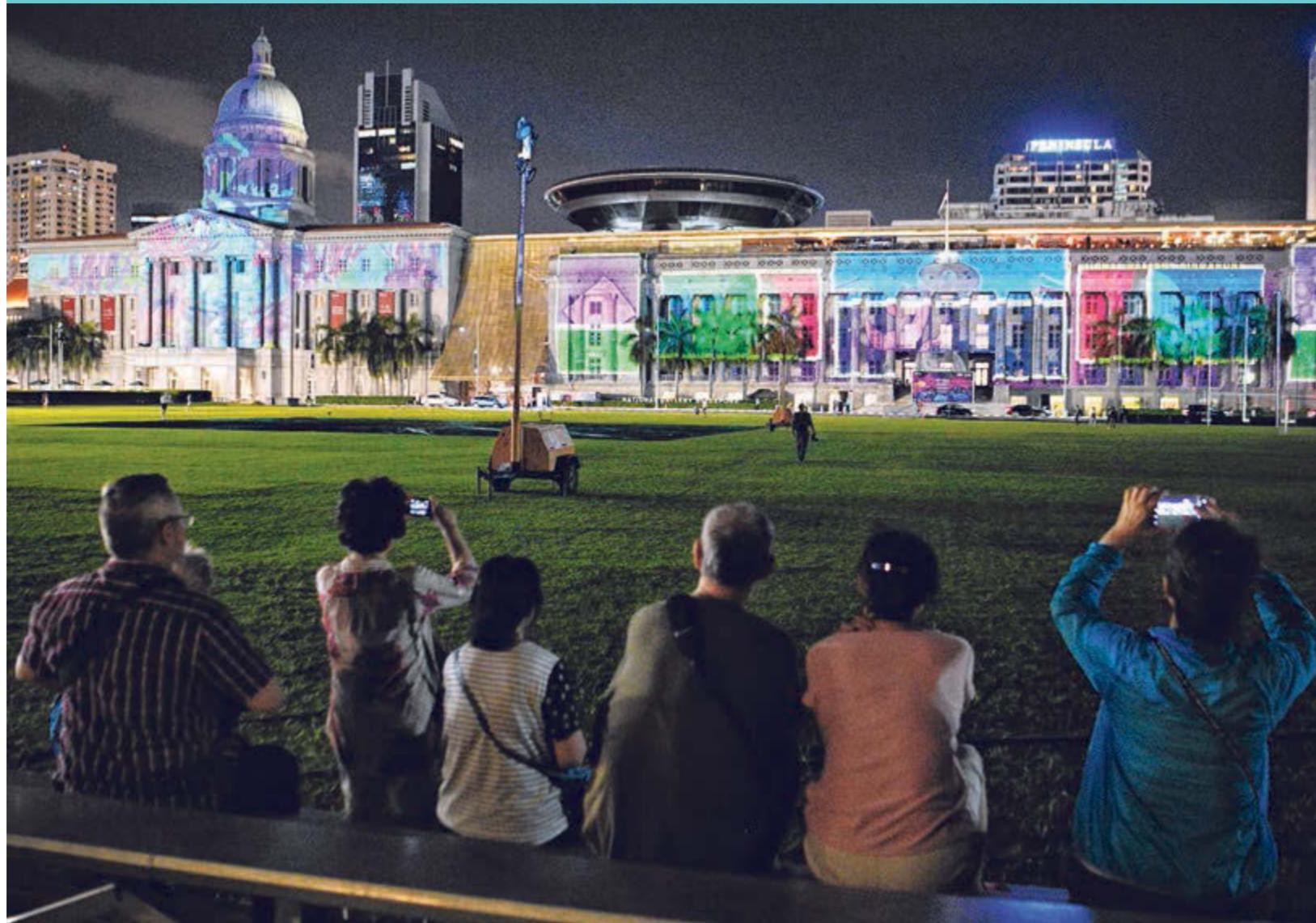


# B HOME



**TAN HENG HAO**  
DOC ONE OF NINE TO  
GET HEALTHCARE'S  
SUPERSTAR AWARD B7

Illuminate your senses at Light to Night Festival



Viewers (above) enjoying a light show projected on the facade of the National Gallery Singapore at a media preview last night of the Light to Night Festival, which returns for a bumper edition until Feb 24. The Odyssey, commissioned by Art Skins on Monuments and developed by Brandon Tay and Safuan Johari, is one of the festival's 50 or so works that will offer visitors tantalising encounters with art and urge them to reflect on the stories that push the boundaries of the art forms they are told in. Visitors will get to walk under an installation by students from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts titled Resonance (top, right) or listen to digitally composed soundscapes in Voices Of Time (above, right), a two-part installation by Singaporean composer Andy Chia, among others, at this annual art event in the Civic District. Venues include the indoor and outdoor areas of the National Gallery, The Arts House, Asian Civilisations Museum, the Esplanade Park, Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall. This year's festival runs in two parts - as part of the Singapore Art Week from tomorrow to Jan 27, and as part of the Singapore Bicentennial from Jan 28 to Feb 24. ST PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG

## Hardened drug addicts to get longer rehab

**Changes to law will redirect such inmates from long-term imprisonment to intensive rehab**

**Cara Wong**

Hardened drug addicts will soon undergo longer and more intensive rehabilitation programmes at the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC), following amendments to the law that open the way for them to undergo repeated rehabilitation rather than serve prison time.

The centre, which used to cater only to addicts caught consuming drugs for the first or second time, will prepare to take in more.

Under changes to the Misuse of Drugs Act, addicts who have been caught more than twice and admit to consuming drugs but do not face other criminal charges will report to the DRC.

They were previously sentenced to long-term imprisonment (LT). This means about one in two LT inmates will now be redirected to rehabilitation instead, said Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam in Parliament on Tuesday.

For now, these repeat drug offenders will undergo a longer and more intense version of the centre's current rehabilitation programmes, said Ms Lau Kuan Mei, assistant director of correctional rehabilitation services.

"But we will review these programmes regularly to see what the needs of the drug offenders here are, and then we will do our research and design them accordingly," said Ms Lau, speaking to the media during a tour of the rehabilitation centre last week.

It currently runs several intervention programmes, including a psychology-based correctional programme to address harmful drug-seeking thoughts, a family programme allowing inmates to build relationships with their families,



Drug Rehabilitation Centre inmates currently attend various configurations of programmes, which differ in intensity according to an inmate's individual risk and needs assessment. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

and skills training to help inmates seek and retain employment.

Inmates attend various configurations of programmes, which differ in intensity according to an inmate's individual risk and needs assessment.

Such assessments are done when individuals first enter the DRC, and are based on how likely they are to re-offend and the degree of their dependence on drugs.

For example, inmates deemed to have a higher risk of relapsing would go through an integrated programme which targets all of their needs. Classes tackle their beliefs and attitudes which support drug use, and they are taught practical skills, such as how to manage their emotions, to help them steer clear of drugs.

Inmates with a lower risk of relapsing might in turn attend only classes that address specific skills they would require, like the assertiveness to say no to drugs, said Ms Lau.

The inmates typically go through

EFFORT NEEDED FROM BOTH SIDES

**We have the proper support to help them through this rehab and reintegration journey, but we also hope they are motivated to also help themselves. It goes both ways.**

**DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT OF PRISONS CHNG KUOK LEONG**, who oversees officers.

sessions together in groups of 12, said Superintendent of Institution B5 Soh Yen Li. B5 is a drug rehabilitation centre within Changi Prison. "As they move along in the same

intervention programme, we also work with them on how to positively support one another in a communal setting," said Supt Soh, who noted the DRC would need more officers to work with the larger group of drug abusers coming in.

After their stint in the DRC, those who are deemed to be suitable will go to one of three different Community Based Programme schemes: home monitoring with an electronic tagging device, a day-release scheme from a community supervision centre, or a halfway house.

During this phase of rehabilitation, they are monitored by prison officers who check in on them about once a month, said Deputy Superintendent of Prisons 2 Chng Kuok Leong, who oversees officers.

"We have the proper support to help them through this rehab and reintegration journey, but we also hope they are motivated to also help themselves. It goes both ways," said DSP Chng.

carawong@sph.com.sg

**Experts laud shift but worry about potential loopholes**

**Cara Wong**

The amended Misuse of Drugs Act that Parliament passed on Tuesday has been applauded by rehabilitation experts for its shift towards rehabilitation of drug addicts, though some wondered if there were loopholes that could increase the chances of a relapse.

Experts highlighted how the new law distinguishes between repentant drug abusers who only consume drugs and admit to it, and recalcitrant drug abusers who deny their habits or have other criminal charges.

The former will be spared a long jail term and get a chance at rehabilitation instead, while the latter will face a jail term of at least a year.

Experts also approved of the new rule to give lighter sentences to drug abusers who surrender.

The moves, they said, do not mean Singapore is becoming soft on drugs, but are based on evidence and recognise the true nature of drug addiction as well as how to deal with it.

Mr Chia Shih Sheung, chief executive of halfway house The Helping Hand, said: "If you surrender yourself, you admit you have a problem, so you are one step ahead of someone who was caught by CNB (Central Narcotics Bureau) and tested positive (for drugs); you've already started the process of wanting to turn over a new leaf."

In such cases, rehabilitation is more appropriate than punishment, agreed Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association's executive director Abdul Karim.

Veteran psychiatrist Munidasa Winslow noted that the lighter sentences could lead to more abusers seeking help for their addiction. "It's putting the

CHALLENGES continued on B2

# Call for commuters to help when trains break down

Transport workers' union suggests training volunteers to assist front-line workers

Christopher Tan  
Senior Transport  
Correspondent

The public should be roped in to help when trains break down, the National Transport Workers' Union has suggested to an advisory panel drafting Singapore's land transport blueprint for the coming decades.

The call to build "a community of commuter volunteers who can be trained as first responders to assist our front-line workers during service disruptions or emergencies" is among a dozen suggestions the union made for the Land Transport Master Plan 2040.

It filed them yesterday to the masterplan's advisory panel, which is gathering feedback to formulate recommendations that it will submit to the Government by mid-February.

Asked what he thought of the idea to get people to help during an MRT breakdown, Singapore University of Social Sciences transport researcher Park Byung Joon said:

“While the intention may be good, the onus should be on the transport operator to provide the necessary support during service interruptions. The timely availability and relevant training provided for commuter volunteers may not be sufficient, and may result in more confusion.”

“

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS  
HEAD EUGENE MOK

"It's not just about being trained. It's about the right number of trained people being at the right place when it happens. Otherwise, it could add to more confusion."

Other recommendations from the union include implementing more full-day bus lanes, rolling out dedicated lanes for cyclists and restricting roadworks to off-peak hours. All these will allow buses to run more smoothly, the union said.

Reiterating a call from other quarters, the union also said transport infrastructure should be designed with ease of maintenance in mind.

It added that companies must ensure workers get enough rest when setting new performance targets.

Companies should also emphasise training in the face of rapid technological changes. The union also said that bus interchanges need to have more parking spaces for the expanded public bus fleet.

"A first-class transport system needs a first-class transport workforce," said the union's executive secretary Melvin Yong, who is also an MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC.

Mr Yong said the union's recommendations focus on "enhancing the work environment of our public transport workers, ensuring the safety and health of our workers, preparing them for transforma-

tion, as well as building greater commuter support so that we can all promote a better travelling environment for all road users".

Just as an idea four years ago that soldiers be deployed to help in a rail breakdown whipped up debate, commuters interviewed had mixed reactions to lending a hand.

Marketing and communications head Eugene Mok, 33, said: "While the intention may be good, the onus should be on the transport operator to provide the necessary support during service interruptions.

"The timely availability and relevant training provided for commuter volunteers may not be sufficient, and may result in more confusion."

Author Jimmy Chua, 35, said: "I believe there will be people who are keen to contribute. It is good for community bonding, too."

"My only concern is that breakdowns are unscheduled, and volunteers may have to carry out their family and work commitments before they can assist."

Engineer Ng Guan Hong, 49, said: "I don't see why, as a commuter who pays for the service, I should volunteer for a profit-driven company."

christian@sph.com.sg



Inmates playing sports in the yard at the Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Upper Changi Road North. One concern raised was whether reformed abusers could see their resolve sway when coming into contact with unrepentant drug abusers at testing centres. ST PHOTOS: ALPHONSUS CHERN

## Getting addicts to surrender is a challenge

FROM B1

onus on the abusers to help themselves," he said.

Where the challenge lies, he said, is for the authorities to convince addicts of the benefits of admitting to their problem. "I'm not too sure how many will turn up and surrender themselves, as the underlying premise has always been that 'CNB is out to get us', not 'CNB is out to help us,'" said Dr Winslow.

Others also pointed out potential loopholes in the rehabilitation system that could lead an addict to relapse.

One concern raised was whether reformed abusers, who will now

have to report to the CNB regularly for up to five years after their release, could see their resolve sway when coming into contact with unrepentant drug abusers at testing centres.

In Parliament on Tuesday, Nominated MP Abbas Ali Mohamed Irshad said the lure of bad company at testing centres might lead reformed abusers to revert to their old ways.

However, halfway house The New Charis Mission's executive director Drong Wong believes that this influence would not matter if the reformed addict has thoroughly adjusted his mindset to stay away from drugs. If a former addict loses

his determination to steer clear of drugs, he could easily seek out bad company on his own, he noted.

"It takes three elements to continue to sustain yourself: new friends, new mindset and a new en-

vironment. If you keep to these three factors, you won't go wrong," said Pastor Wong, a former drug addict himself.

carawong@sph.com.sg

Yong and others faced challenges.

Inmates taking classes at the Drug Rehabilitation Centre. Experts approve of the new rule that gives lighter sentences to drug abusers who surrender.

## Over 200 cases of online ticket sale scams last year

Tee Zhuo

More than 200 reports of e-commerce scams involving concert and event ticket sales worth at least \$89,000 were received by the police last year.

The police revealed the figures in a Facebook post yesterday, warning concertgoers of such scams in the light of upcoming events.

In last year's cases, victims either did not receive the tickets or received invalid tickets after payments were made.

The post mentions upcoming concerts for the year including

those by Korean boy band BTS, British singer Ed Sheeran, and American singers Josh Groban and John Mayer.

BTS will be performing this Saturday at the National Stadium.

The Straits Times reported last October that the tickets priced between \$88 and \$348 were sold out within four hours.

Sheeran is due to perform on April 26 at the same venue, with tickets between \$68 and \$248.

The same month, Mayer's debut

concert will take place at the Singapore Indoor Stadium. Pre-sales for the April 1 show, priced from \$108 to \$248, started on Tuesday while

public sales start today.

You Raise Me Up singer Groban performs next month. His Feb 25 concert at The Star Theatre has tickets between \$108 and \$328.

The police advised the public to avoid buying tickets at prices that seem too low, or making payments or deposits in advance.

"Try to use shopping platforms and arrangements that release your payment to the seller only upon receiving the item," the police said in their post.

Customers should purchase only from authorised sellers, they added.

On Sunday, ST reported that a

scam site was phishing for personal details by impersonating national carrier Singapore Airlines and offering free plane tickets.

It was also reported last Saturday that scammers were impersonating the Singapore Police Force with a fake website to phish for personal details.

Those who wish to report scams should contact the police on 1800-255-0000 or at www.police.gov.sg/iwitness.

More information on scams can be found by calling 1800-722-6688 or at www.scamalert.sg

teezhuo@sph.com.sg

# Centre to boost infectious disease management

New facility designed to manage outbreak on scale of Sars set to be fully operational by May

Rei Kurohi

A state-of-the-art national centre for managing infectious diseases is set to be fully operational by May.

The 330-bed National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) is designed to manage an outbreak on the scale of Sars in 2003, said its executive director Leo Yee Sin at a media briefing yesterday.

It stands next to the new Ng Teng Fong Centre for Healthcare Innovation and, together, the facilities in Novena cost \$900 million to build.

Professor Leo said the rooms in the 17 wards are spacious, allowing the centre's capacity to be increased quickly if necessary. Doctors and nurses also have ample space to move around while wearing protective gear.

## Man jailed 40 months over PIC scam

Selina Lum  
Law Correspondent

A businessman who tried to hamper investigations into a \$13.6 million Productivity and Innovation Credit (PIC) scam involving multiple people and more than 200 entities was yesterday sentenced to 40 months' jail for obstruction of justice.

The PIC scheme grants cash payouts and bonuses to businesses to spur productivity.

The sentence imposed on Lim Chit Foo, 35, was the highest handed down for obstruction of justice offences.

Lim was found guilty last September of instigating four others, including TV host Tom Lee Teng, to give false information to Commercial Affairs Department investigators.

Lim instigated his employees Stephanie Tan Mui Shan, Maurice Tan Wei Qiang and Wong Kwong Weng to lie to investigators and shift the blame to Chinese national Wu Hai Jun, to deflect investigations from focusing on him.

He also instigated Mr Lee, who was his business partner, to falsely inform investigators that Mr Lee had bought and seen software used by the company Micro Remix Jay (MRJ), to mask his own involvement in a PIC application made by the company.

Lim's role was to handle government-related issues, including Ministry of Manpower, CPF and tax applications. Mr Lee gave Lim his SingPass details to submit forms for government-related issues as he was mostly overseas for his show business engagements.

In 2013, Lim told Mr Lee PIC applications could be made for expenses incurred on purchases made by the company, and a portion of such expenses would be paid back as a rebate under the PIC scheme.

Mr Lee was aware of PIC applications made in 2013 and 2014, because he signed the application forms.

In 2015, the two had plans to open a standalone outlet to promote products under the MRJ brand. Lim suggested that another company be set up.

Mr Lee agreed and incorporated MRJ. Although the company did not operate any business, PIC applications were made for software purportedly bought and used by MRJ.

Separately, Lim has been charged with multiple offences, involving 25 for allegedly cheating the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore out of \$1.3 million through the submission of false PIC applications. These are pending.

selinal@sph.com.sg

lysed on-site. At the old CDC facility, samples were sent out to other laboratories.

Said Prof Leo: "If we need to confront conditions that are highly contagious, we can effectively lock down the unit while ensuring that patients can still receive the maximum level of care with all the integrated support facilities and infrastructure that are in the building."

She added that the care received by HLIU patients is equivalent to that in an intensive care unit.

All sections in the centre that handle patients or samples have special features to further prevent contamination.

The centre's ventilation system is designed for air to always flow from higher-pressure "clean" areas like the corridor to lower-pressure "dirty" areas such as the patient's room or laboratory suites where samples are analysed.

Air is passed through high-efficiency particulate air filters, which remove 99.999 per cent of particu-

late matter, and is treated with ultraviolet radiation before being circulated out of the building.

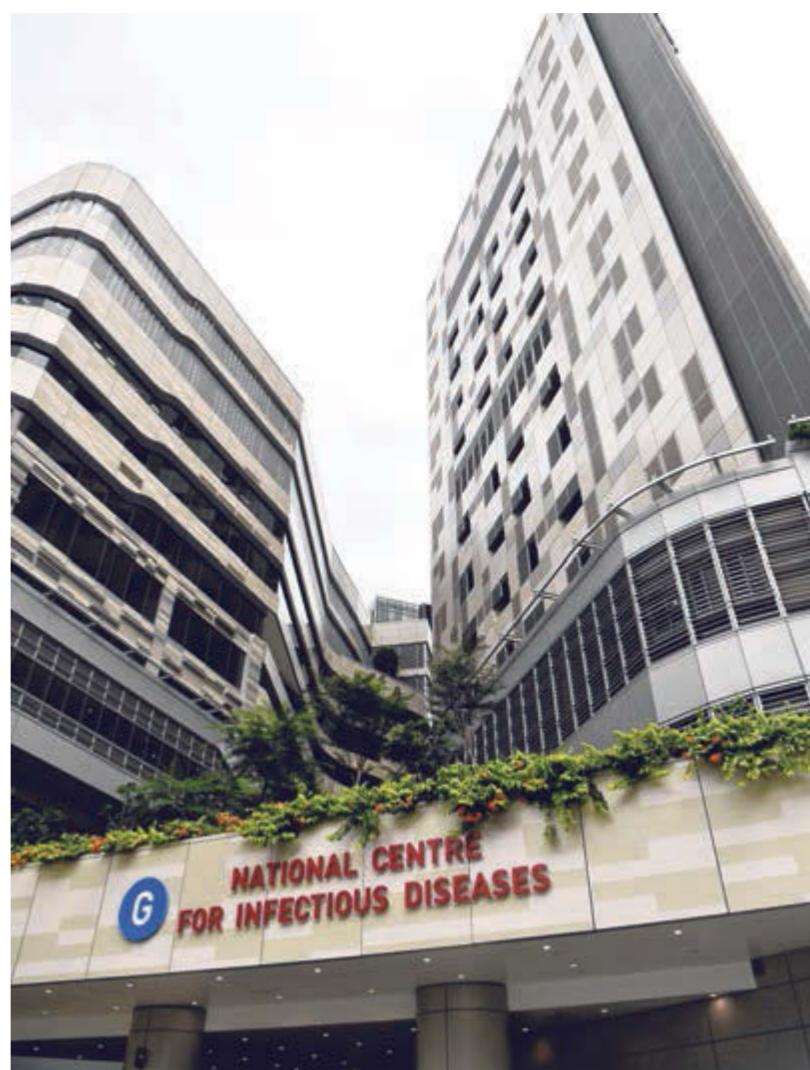
An alarm is triggered if doors are left open for too long. Separate doors leading in and out of rooms are also programmed to open one at a time.

The NCID houses public health, research and training facilities, and will also facilitate national programmes targeting specific diseases like human immunodeficiency virus and tuberculosis.

The facilities include the National Public Health Laboratory, which carries out tests to track infectious diseases and detect emerging pathogens such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus.

During a recent spate of food poisoning cases, the laboratory tested samples from the eateries involved – Spize restaurant and the Mandarin Orchard hotel – for salmonella and norovirus.

rei@sph.com.sg



A key feature of the 330-bed National Centre for Infectious Diseases is its high-level isolation unit for treating high-risk pathogens, including haemorrhagic fevers caused by the Ebola and Marburg viruses. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

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## Tamil Murasu launches new site

Tamil-language newspaper Tamil Murasu has revamped its website to offer readers a broad platter of content, from hyper-local news and horoscopes to entertainment stories and human interest features.

The [www.tamilmurasu.com.sg](http://www.tamilmurasu.com.sg) site was launched yesterday, timed with the annual Pongal festival, traditionally celebrated by farmers in India to give thanks for a year of bountiful harvest.

To discern what readers wanted in the new site and keep ahead of digital trends, the Tamil Murasu

team sought feedback from the public, and also visited India's two largest Tamil news publications, *Dinamalar* and *The Hindu* (Tamil).

The result is a new site with several features, including:

- Singapore news on social issues, Tamil community events and festivals
- Lifestyle stories about health, food and fashion
- An entertainment section featuring Kollywood news, and coverage of *Thaipusam* and

Deepavali festivals

- A sports segment with a focus on football and cricket
- Special weekly features that focus on human interest and social issues stories, and multimedia content.

Mr Jawharil Rajendran, editor of Tamil Murasu, said: "Tamil Murasu prides itself on being the voice of the Tamil community and we are continuously looking for ways to refresh our website to deliver content that is engaging and culturally relevant to our readers."

"We hope the new website will not only appeal to Tamils in Singapore and Malaysia but also to the larger Tamil diaspora all over the world. We welcome each and every one of them."

Tamil Murasu was founded in July 1935 by the late G. Sarangapani, a leader of the Tamil community.

In 1996, Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) acquired Tamil Murasu, with Times Publishing owning a minority stake, and in March 2004, the daily became wholly owned by SPH.

### தமிழ்முரசு



The revamped website offers readers a wide range of content from hyper-local news to entertainment stories to human interest features. PHOTO: TAMIL MURASU

## Fewer mynahs roosting in Potong Pasir

### Birds prompted to move to less inhabited areas after trees that they roost on are pruned

**Rachel Au-Yong**  
Housing Correspondent

Potong Pasir residents who have had their sleep disrupted by the cacophony of mynahs squawking can rest more soundly now.

The number of Javan mynahs – a non-native, invasive bird species – has dwindled from 2,800 as of the end of last month to about 300 as of Tuesday night, Potong Pasir MP Sitiok Yih Pin told *The Straits Times*.

While the noise is not completely eradicated, the reduction is a welcome respite.

Since January last year, the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority (AVA) has received 20 complaints from Potong Pasir residents about the mynahs that, in large numbers, pose a threat to native bird species when they compete for nesting and food resources. In response, Mr Sitiok filed three questions in Parliament, the latest one on Monday.

After several rounds of trials and tests that had varying levels of success, the AVA, National Parks Board and Jalan Besar Town Council appear to have found a solution.

Some 300 trees in the neighbourhood that the mynahs roost on are being pruned in stages, to nudge the birds to fly to trees in a "more uninhabited spot" farther from residential areas, Mr Sitiok said.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would one day be directing

the flight path of birds," said the MP, an accountant by training.

"A lot of progress has been made," he added. "For one thing, not as many mynahs are hanging around at the trees in the horse-shoe-shaped carpark (at Block 145 Potong Pasir), which tended to amplify the sound."

Coffee-shop assistant Ong Tong Chye, 61, said he has seen fewer birds at the coffee shop at Block 146.

Business analyst Evelyn Chee, 36, said the mynahs have been a problem since last year, but the disturbance caused by the birds has been more apparent recently.

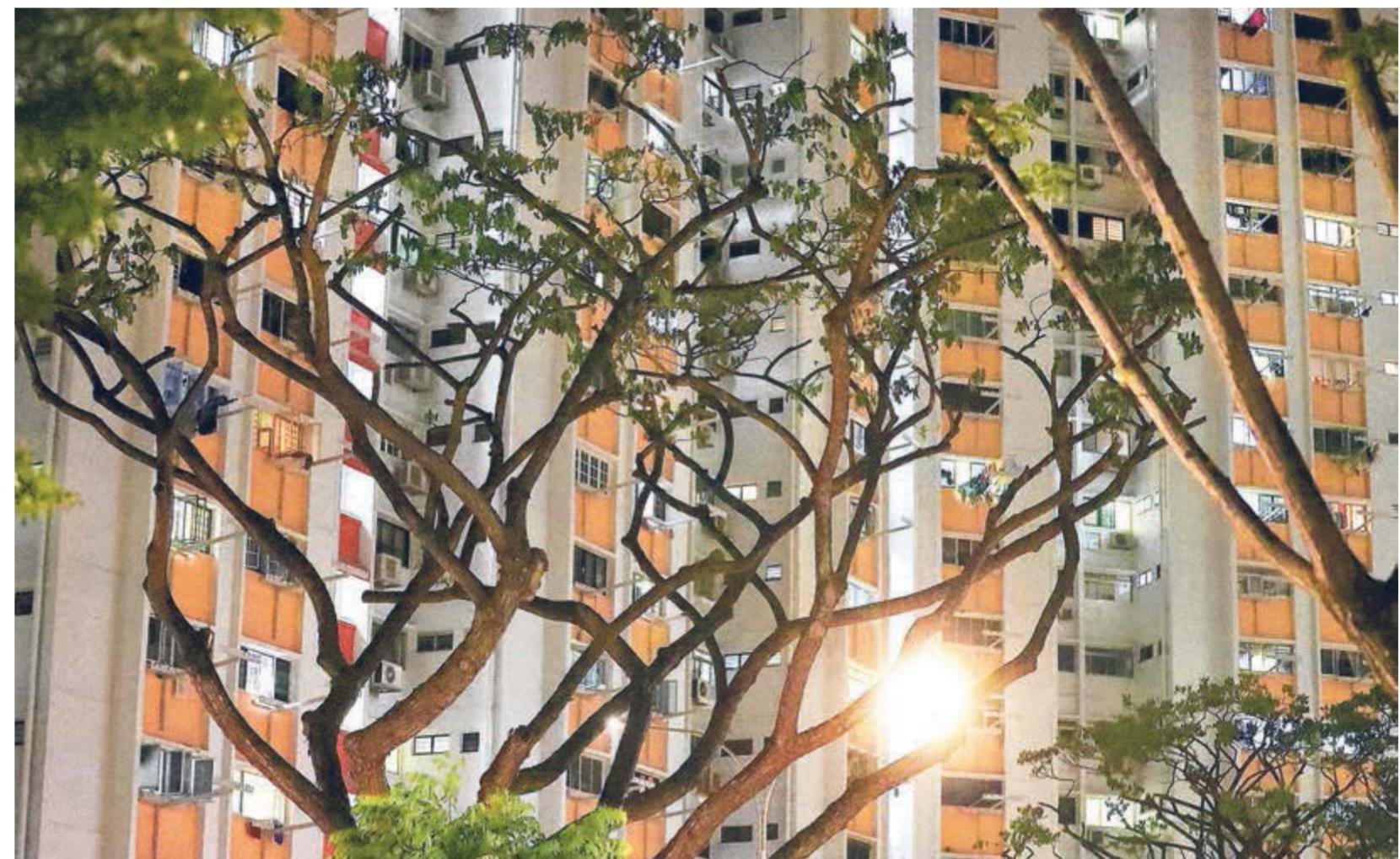
She added that the mynahs have moved to the other side of Block 145 after the trees on one side were pruned.

Asked about this, Mr Sitiok noted that some of the trees were pruned only yesterday.

"If all goes well, the birds will eventually settle down in an uninhabited area," he said, adding that he hopes all the mynahs will be permanently "moved" within the next two months.

Last month, the AVA tested a "roost net" on a sea apple tree in Potong Pasir Avenue 2 – a giant covering placed over a tree that allows birds to enter and roost on the tree, but prevents them from coming out. The trapped birds were later euthanised.

In a written response on Monday, Minister for National Development



Some 300 trees in the vicinity that the mynahs roost on are being pruned in stages, said Potong Pasir MP Sitiok Yih Pin. Minister for National Development Lawrence Wong said that besides pruning trees, a longer-term measure is to replace the current trees with types that are less preferred by the birds. ST PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

Lawrence Wong said the AVA is fine-tuning the method before considering wider development.

Mr Wong added that besides pruning the trees and expecting the

mynahs to disperse to non-residential areas, a second, longer-term measure is to replace the current trees with types that are less preferred by the mynahs.

"These are trees with crowns that are less dense, but will still provide greenery and shade," he said.

He added that the public must also keep the environment clean

and not feed the birds.

rachelay@sph.com.sg

• Additional reporting by Vanessa Liu

## Less piracy, armed robbery in Asia waters but 'vigilance still key'

**Lim Min Zhang**

There were 76 incidents of piracy and armed robbery reported in Asia waters last year, the lowest in more than a decade.

The number of significant incidents – which involved armed perpetrators, leading to violence against ships' crew in some cases – was 10 last year, the lowest in 12 years.

In the straits of Malacca and Singa-

pore, there was a dip in armed robbery cases, from nine in 2017 to eight last year. Like in previous years, most were petty theft incidents and involved four to six perpetrators.

This information was released by the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre on Tuesday.

At a media briefing, the Singapore-based centre's executive director Masafumi Kuroki urged law enforcement, regulatory authorities

and the shipping industry to continue the vigilance and cooperation that has led to the decrease in incidents.

"In Asia, more than 90 per cent of the incidents are armed robbery against ships, which occur in territorial waters of the coastal states."

"The ownership and efforts of the coastal states in deterring, detecting and apprehending perpetrators are vital in reducing the number of incidents in Asia, as are the vigilance and preventive measures by ships," he added.

The 76 incidents last year, comprising 72 armed robbery and four piracy cases, marked a decline of 25 per cent from 2017.

The total figure was the lowest since the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre began keeping records in 2007.

The total number of cases fluctuated in the last 12 years, from a high



An area of concern is abduction, said Mr Masafumi Kuroki, referring to three cases last year.

of 203 in 2015, to 87 in 2016 and 102 in 2017.

The incidents are collected from designated government agencies of ReCAAP's 20 member states, which include 14 Asian countries such as Singapore, India and the Philippines. The Maritime and Port Authority is Singapore's designated agency.

An area of concern is abduction, said Mr Kuroki, referring to three incidents of crew abduction last year. This was nevertheless an improvement compared to 2017 which saw seven cases, he added.

On Tuesday, the centre also released for the first time results of its data analysis of 1,560 incidents it collected in Asia since 2007.

Findings include how the majority of cases involved four to six perpetrators (34 per cent) or one to three perpetrators (24 per cent), with 80 per cent of cases happening between 7pm and 6am.

The results were shared on Tuesday at the 10th Nautical Forum, which is ReCAAP's annual dialogue with maritime, diplomatic and shipping communities, attended by more than 150 representatives.

"While the results do not tell us if the same patterns will continue in the future, what happened in the past can be quite useful for the shipping industry – when they go to certain locations, what kind of measures they have to take," he said.

mzlim@sph.com.sg

**TENDER NOTICE**  
INVITATION TO TENDER FOR:

**A) SING.浪 CONCERT 2019**  
(No: SCCC/PROG/CE19/001)

**B) TGIF MUSIC STATION《周5音乐站》**  
(No: SCCC/PROG/TGIF19/001)

1. Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre invites tender offers for:
 

- a. To conceptualise, project manage and execute the **Sing.浪 Concert 2019** for Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre's Cultural Extravaganza 2019; and
- b. The provision of sound, lighting, visual, staging equipment and artiste management for the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre's TGIF Music Station《周5音乐站》.

2. Please download the Tender documents from SCCC website at <https://www.singaporeccc.org.sg/tender>

3. The Tenderer is required to complete and submit the required documents in a sealed envelope, together with all supporting data or relevant information in a ring bound A4 folder (with a softcopy of the application stored in a thumb drive), deposited by hand into the Tender Box located at: **Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, 1 Straits Boulevard, Level 1 Lift Lobby, Singapore 018906.**

4. The closing date for submission is **Monday, 18 February 2019, 4.00pm**. Tenders submitted after the stipulated date and time will be disqualified.

5. Tenderer is required to register and attend a mandatory briefing for the respective tenders on the following dates:
 

- a. **Friday, 25 January 2019, 11.00am** for the conceptualisation, project management and execution of **Sing.浪 Concert 2019**. Registration is via the following email: [rexaww@singaporeccc.org.sg](mailto:rexaww@singaporeccc.org.sg). Please RSVP your attendance by **Thursday, 24 January 2019, 4.00pm**.
- b. **Friday, 25 January 2019, 3.00pm** for the provision of sound, lighting, visual, staging equipment and artiste management for TGIF Music Station《周5音乐站》. Registration is via the following email: [catherinean@singaporeccc.org.sg](mailto:catherinean@singaporeccc.org.sg). Please RSVP your attendance by **Thursday, 24 January 2019, 4.00pm**.

6. Details of the briefing can be found in the respective tender documents.

7. SCCC does not bind itself to award to the lowest of any offers.

IEN Registration No.: 2013095772

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**SPHmagazines**

# Apex court hears bid for by-election in GRC

SDP member contends that seat vacated by President Halimah must be filled under law

**Adrian Lim**  
Political Correspondent

A legal challenge for a by-election to be called in Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC was heard by the Court of Appeal yesterday, with sections of Singapore's Constitution coming under scrutiny.

The appeal, filed by Singapore Democratic Party member Wong Sook Yee, a resident in the GRC, comes after the High Court dismissed her application last April.

She is contending that the GRC seat vacated by President Halimah Yacob – who resigned in August 2017 to run in the presidential election – must be filled under law. To do this, the remaining three MPs in Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC should resign, and a by-election be called.

In their submissions to the apex court, lawyers from the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) said Dr Wong's interpretation of Article 49 (1) of the Constitution "violates" its plain language.

Article 49 (1) states that when the seat of a Member has become vacant for any reason other than a dissolution of Parliament, the vacancy shall be filled by election.

The AGC team, led by Deputy Attorney-General Hri Kumar Nair, said the Article provides for an election for the vacant seat only, and no other. "It does not contain an obligation to call an election for all the seats in a GRC when a single seat falls vacant," they noted. There is also nothing in the "plain words" of the Article which obliges the remaining GRC members to vacate their seats so a by-election can be called, the AGC said.

Dr Wong's lawyer, Mr Peter Low, argued that Article 49 (1) does not distinguish between seats in a GRC or a single-member constituency, and requires a vacant seat in a GRC to be filled.

Citing Article 39A of the Constitution, Mr Low said the law also requires that a GRC contains a member from a minority community until the dissolution of Parliament.

But AGC's lawyers said that Article 39A only requires that the GRC team have a minority member at the point of elections. They also pointed to Section 24 (2A) of the Parliamentary Elections Act, which states that in the case of a GRC, no writ shall be issued for an election to fill any vacancy, "unless all the members for that constituency have vacated their seats".

Referring to a 1988 parliamentary debate on the GRC system, the AGC said this provision was to guard against one MP holding the other members to ransom with a threat of resignation.

The case was heard by a five-judge panel comprising Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Judges of Appeal Andrew Phang, Judith Prakash, Steven Chong and Tay Yong Kwang.

Mr Low also argued that voters have rights to be represented by a full slate of elected MPs.

He said constituents in a GRC are "short-changed" when not all the seats are filled. For example, he said, each MP can file up to five questions in Parliament sittings. But Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC residents are short of one MP, resulting in less representation. But Justice Chong said while voters in such a GRC may be "under-represented", it does not mean they are "unrepresented" in Parliament.

Justice Phang also said that whether there will be "political fallout" from having one less member in the GRC was not applicable to the current court proceedings.

Judgment on the case will be delivered at a later date. Dr Wong was not in court yesterday.

The three remaining MPs in Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC are National Development Minister Lawrence Wong, Mr Ong Teng Koon and Mr Alex Yam. Minister of State for National Development and Manpower Zaqy Mohamad from Chua Chu Kang GRC has taken on the role of grassroots adviser to the ward Madam Halimah served in.

adrianl@sph.com.sg

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Call Karen at 68718958 for more info about the talk (Hurry, seats are limited)



Part of Straits Interactive's DATA PROTECTION ADVISORY SERIES

## S'porean says he was told to lie about money trail in Russian doping scandal

**Selina Lum**  
Law Correspondent

A Singaporean businessman has told a court here that he was told to lie, to hide a money trail linked to one of the biggest athletics doping cover-up involving one of Russia's biggest stars.

Tan Tong Han, owner of Black Tidings, said that Mr Papa Massata Diack, the son of disgraced world athletic chief Lamine who is wanted by Interpol, told him to give a fake story if he was questioned about certain transactions after news broke about a doping scandal in Russian athletics.

In that scandal, Liliya Shobukhova – once the second fastest female marathon runner in history – was blackmailed by officials for covering up her doping violations.

Yesterday, the 36-year-old Tan was sentenced to a week's jail for giving false information to a Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) officer who was probing the flow of funds in and out of Black Tidings.

On March 27, 2014, about \$548,000 was transferred to Black Tidings from a Senegal company known as Pamodzi Consulting, owned by former International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) marketing consultant Papa Massata Diack. Tan issued an invoice to Pamodzi for the money, and it gave a generic description of work done. But no such work was carried out.

The court heard that shortly after the fund transfer, Mr Diack told Tan to transfer \$524,000, or about



Tan Tong Han, 36, was sentenced yesterday to a week's jail for giving false information to a CPIB officer investigating the flow of funds in and out of Black Tidings.  
ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW

€300,000, to the bank account of Shobukhova's husband.

Tan and Mr Diack reportedly became friends in China at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

It was at the end of 2014 when the athletic world was rocked with revelations that senior figures in the athletic world had extorted money from Shobukhova to cover up violations in her athlete biological passport so that she could continue to compete, including at the 2012 Lon-

don Olympics Games.

The scandal led to life bans from the sport for Mr Diack, Mr Valentin Balakhnichhev, a former president of the All-Russia Athletics Federation and treasurer of the IAAF, and Russian endurance coach Alexei Melnikov.

Separately, in 2015, the CPIB started investigations. On Nov 5 that year, when Tan was asked to explain the transfers, he claimed the incoming sum was for work

Black Tidings had done for Pamodzi for the 2015 IAAF World Championships in Beijing. Tan claimed this included making sure sponsor logos were printed correctly, setting up displays, organising press conferences and arranging transport.

As for the outgoing payment, Tan claimed he had been tricked by a John Pierre Bonor into making the transfer.

On Nov 20, he admitted he had lied, that Black Tidings did not do any work for Pamodzi and that John Pierre Bonor was a fictitious person.

Black Tidings has also been linked to allegations that the vote to hand the upcoming Olympics in 2020 was rigged. It is accused of receiving US\$2 million (\$2.71 million) from the Tokyo team, money which the French authorities suspect was meant to bribe delegates.

Part of the money is believed to have gone to Mr Diack, whose father, an International Olympic Committee member at the time of Tokyo's bidding, held considerable sway over African Olympic votes.

The allegations continue to cast a shadow over Tokyo's preparations for the Olympics, despite the Japan Olympic Committee (JOC) having cleared its officials in 2016. It said the payment to Black Tidings was legitimate and had been made in return for consulting services.

Last month, JOC head Tsunekazu Takeda was placed under formal investigation in Paris for corruption. On Tuesday, he faced the cameras back home, denying the accusation. "I will fully cooperate with the French authorities in investigating this matter and do my utmost to prove my innocence," he said.

Tan, who was represented in court by Ms Diana Ngiam, meanwhile will start his jail term on Feb 20 after being allowed to defer it because of the Chinese New Year holiday.

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# Healthcare awards honour 'superstars' who go extra mile

Nine professionals receive highest accolade for raising the bar on quality healthcare

Rei Kurohi

A LISTENING EAR AND FRIEND

I often describe it as a journey that we go on with the patients. That means being more than just a doctor addressing their medical needs.

“

ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR TAN HENG HAO, a senior consultant and head of the Department of Reproductive Medicine at KKH, and director of the KK In-vitro Fertilisation Centre.

When Adjunct Associate Professor Tan Heng Hao decided to specialise in reproductive medicine in 2008, it was because he wanted to balance surgical and medical work.

But treating patients has often required him to play another role – as a listening ear and a friend.

Prof Tan, in his 40s, is a senior consultant and head of the Department of Reproductive Medicine at KK Women's and Children's Hospital, as well as the director of the KK In-vitro Fertilisation Centre.

When asked, many of the couples who visit him say they experience social stigma associated with being childless. For some, this can lead to anxiety, depression and even the breakdown of their marriage.

Prof Tan said: “I often describe it

as a journey that we go on with the patients. That means being more than just a doctor addressing their medical needs.”

On Tuesday, Prof Tan was one of nine healthcare professionals presented with the Superstar Award, the highest accolade among the Singapore Health Quality Service Awards.

He said that being a good fertility doctor requires patience, empathy and a non-judgmental attitude: “The social pressure to have more children or to carry on the family name can be quite tremendous. So this is often not just a medical issue but a psychological and emotional one.”

He added that for some patients, the “fertility journeys” can take years with several rounds of in-vitro fertilisation.

“Even then, you can't get everyone pregnant,” he said.

President Halimah Yacob, guest of honour at the ceremony held in the University Cultural Centre at the National University of Singapore, presented a total of 3,462 awards to



Adjunct Associate Professor Tan Heng Hao (left) and physiotherapist Yap Thian Yong both received the Superstar Award on Tuesday, the highest accolade among the Singapore Health Quality Service Awards. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

healthcare workers from 34 public and private institutions, as well as organisations in the intermediate and long-term care sector such as Peacehaven Nursing Home.

Madam Halimah said in her speech: “The award recipients have set themselves apart by going the extra mile and raising the bar to deliver quality care and a positive experience to patients and their caregivers.”

Another Superstar Award recipient was Mr Yap Thian Yong, a physiotherapist at St Luke's Hospital.

He works mostly with elderly patients undergoing rehabilitation.

Many worry that they are too old to exercise, but Mr Yap, 28, said: “To build up their confidence, I sometimes pair up patients who have just come in with those with similar conditions who have regained some good function through rehabilitation.”

The next time new patients come in, they can act as role models to share their experiences and show what can be achieved.”

Mr Yap is also involved in care innovation at St Luke's Hospital, where he conducted trials of a ceiling-mounted track harness for supporting patients doing walking and

balancing exercises and helped incorporate it into the hospital's rehabilitation programme.

Besides his work in the hospital, he once fulfilled a terminally ill patient's dying wish to go on an outing to Gardens by the Bay with his family, working with his team to plan the outing.

He said: “I feel blessed to receive this award as a recognition of what my peers and I have achieved. I want to be more than just a therapist who helps people to walk again.”

rei@sph.com.sg

## TCM physician suspended for abetting illegal massage joint

Theresa Tan  
Senior Social Affairs  
Correspondent

A traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) physician has been suspended from practice for three years for abetting the operation of an illegal massage parlour in MacPherson called Gold Finger Well-

ness & Health Centre. Sein Mok Sin, 68, was suspended by the TCM Practitioners Board last month, it said in a statement on Monday.

In 2017, the police lodged a complaint with the board that Sein had been convicted of two counts of offences for abetting the operation of an illegal massage joint. He was fined \$1,000 by the State Courts.

The board, a statutory board un-

der the Health Ministry, set up an investigation committee to probe the complaint. Sein admitted that he had allowed his TCM registration certificate to be displayed at Gold Finger's premises to pass it off as a TCM clinic.

The board found that Sein's offences involved dishonesty and implied a defect in character. His actions also breached the Ethical Code

for TCM physicians and the Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Act. While Sein was a first-time offender, he was unremorseful during the investigation, the board said. It decided to suspend his registration as a TCM practitioner for three years and issue him with a censure.

Sein is not the first TCM physician found guilty of working in cahoots with unlicensed massage joint opera-

tors. Acupuncturist Goh Seng Ngei, who used to practise at The World Medical Hall in Selegie Road, was convicted of running an unlicensed massage joint. He had also made false declarations that he was not convicted of any offences. The board cancelled his registration as an acupuncturist with effect from August last year.

The Straits Times had previously reported that some massage parlours – including those offering sexual services – were passing themselves off as TCM clinics. This disguise tactic came after spas and mas-

sage joints found it harder to get a licence to operate from the Police Licensing and Regulatory Department, industry players said.

In a statement, the board said: “The Board takes a serious view of any transgression of the Ethical Code by registered TCM practitioners. Any practitioners who associate themselves with unlicensed massage establishments and thereby bring disrepute to the TCM profession will face disciplinary action by the Board.”

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Visit the fair at the Level 1 atriums of the following malls on these dates:

- Century Square (Jan 23 to Feb 4)
- White Sands (Jan 23 to Feb 4)
- Tiong Bahru Plaza (Jan 24 to Feb 4)

• Hougang Mall  
(Jan 25 to Feb 4)

It's an opportunity to jazz up your decor for the new year too. Lanterns, blooming plants and other pretty accents will be on sale to add a touch of festivity to your home.

What's more, various exciting rewards, giveaways and promotions await at AsiaMalls' Century Square, Hougang Mall, Liang Court, Tampines 1, Tiong Bahru Plaza and White Sands.

### CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVITIES

**Where:** Various locations

**When:** Jan 23 to Feb 4

**Info:** [www.amperkz.com.sg](http://www.amperkz.com.sg)



### Perfect keepsakes

Bai Jia Xing's cookie tins are adorned with Chinese surnames, and chances are, you will find yours there.

The cover of each tin features a magnet of the surname. Choose from a seemingly endless variety of cookie choices, including traditional Chinese New Year goodies such as pineapple tarts and almond cookies.

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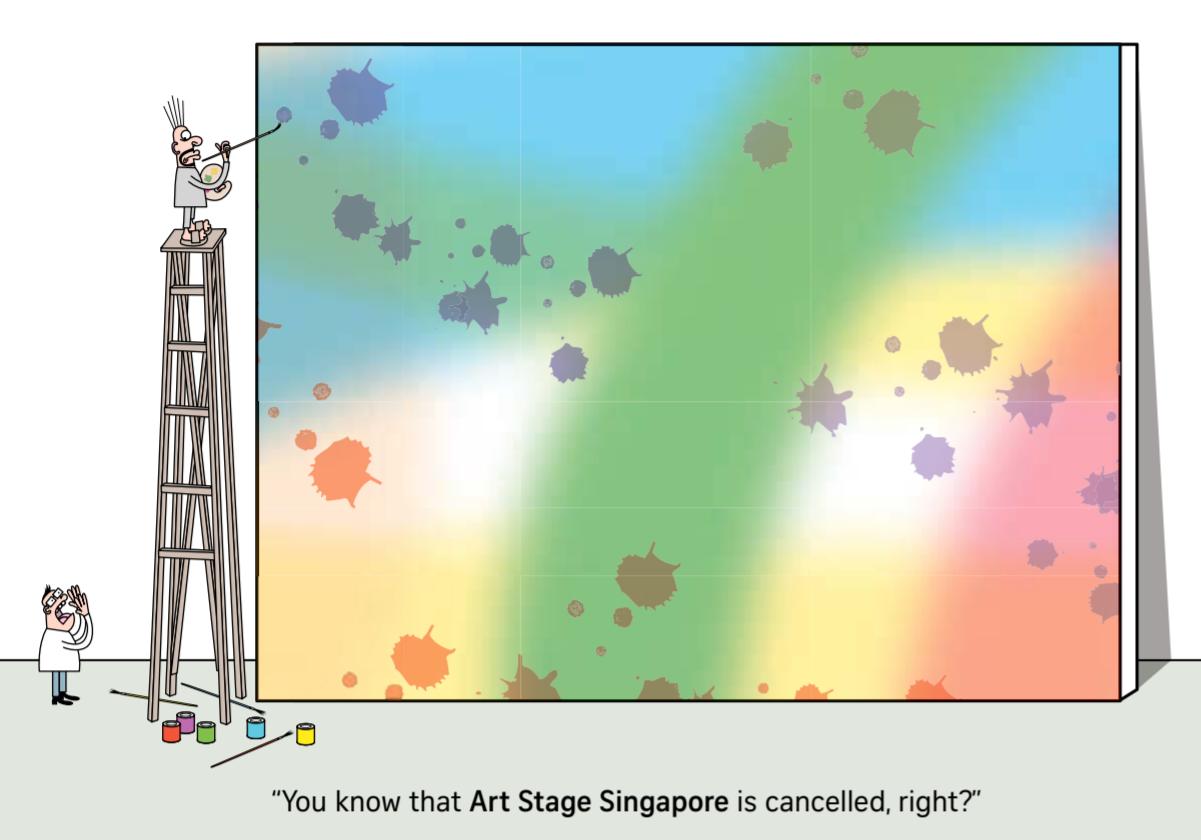
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# FORUM

*miel's TAKE*



## Today's Singapore built on British systems

It is very odd to call the office in charge of the celebrations of Singapore's 720-year history the Bicentennial Office (Why Raffles flanked by statues of only men, by Singapore Bicentennial Office; Jan 12).

Wouldn't "septcentennial" be a better approximation of the period under coverage for the festivities?

Or was this extended historical framing a mere reaction to criticism that the office was glorifying colonial imperialism, and that we should instead look further back at the time when local affairs were managed by the locals, never mind the fact that most of them were similarly oppressed subjects of absolute rule?

This begs the question: Was Sang Nila Utama any more local than Sir Stamford Raffles?

After all, the Srivijayan prince was born and bred in Palembang, Sumatra, and not on the island which he founded as the

kingdom of Singapura. Ditto the Majapahit and Siamese kingdoms, which reportedly influenced our island's evolution as part of Greater India between the 14th and 16th centuries.

It seems that the public sector, in managing contentious public opinions, has leaned increasingly towards mixing these all up in the name of being "inclusive" in recent years, resulting in a convolution and dilution of standards across the board.

The Bicentennial Office should focus on celebrating the founding of modern Singapore by Raffles and its evolution as a global city since then.

And there is absolutely nothing wrong with this approach as history is often framed and studied according to periods.

While Singapore did enjoy golden epochs centuries before 1819, few would also dispute that 1819 – precisely 200 years ago and known

aptly as a bicentennial – represents a major turning point in our nation's modern history.

Our island was transformed into a free port which subsequently rode the wave of the first industrial revolution and attracted migrants from across the world.

Today's Singapore is built on the legacy of British institutions and systems – which the founding leaders of our independent and sovereign city-state adapted to suit our realities and needs – and not the absolute monarchies of ancient Indianised and Malay kingdoms.

Whatever one's grievances with the oppressive evils of colonialism, imperialism and totalitarianism, history should be assessed fairly and squarely via dispassionate minds and hearts.

Facts must always remain facts without prejudice in a multicultural metropolis.

Toh Cheng Seong

### Cater to general public instead of interest groups

The Government must take the lead and make decisions for maximum benefit of the general public rather than cater to interest groups, especially if their requests come at the expense of the needs of the majority.

Recently, I read a Forum letter from someone in an interest group lamenting an absence of women in the statues installed

near the Sir Stamford Raffles statue as part of our bicentennial celebrations.

Members of interest groups have specific aims and may wish to advance them with little consideration for others.

However, they should not be selfish.

Why shouldn't houses be built in forested areas and why should

people be cramped in tiny flats in congested areas instead?

Why should we divert our cross-country MRT line and spend additional money to build a system which will not serve its original intention of providing a fast and direct journey from the east to the west just to please a few nature lovers?

We must first and foremost cater to the majority of the general public who need basic facilities at accessible, affordable and economical rates.

Patrick Wong

### S'pore was well-connected before 1819

I disagree with Mr Chen Junyi that Singapore was plugged into the world only in 1819, and was unable to play a role in the global trade network until then (Don't rob colonial British of credit due them; Jan 11).

The National Museum of Singapore will hold an exhibition this year to show, among other things, how Singapore was already well connected to the region and the world before 1819 (Singapore's

rich pre-colonial history to be showcased; Oct 22, 2018).

And at least two centuries before 1819, Singapore was already appreciated for its fine port and commercial potential as a colonial settlement, according to Dr Peter Borschberg of the National University of Singapore's history department (Raffles did not 'discover' Singapore; April 5, 2018).

Archaeological findings are telling. For instance, a second

excavation at the site of today's Kampong Glam revealed that the district was flourishing in 1819 (New signs point to a thriving Kampong Glam 200 years ago; July 9, 2018).

The people of ancient Singapore must have been proud of their achievements.

Today, we should also be proud of our success as an independent nation, instead of attributing credit to a non-altruistic foreign power.

Anthony Oei

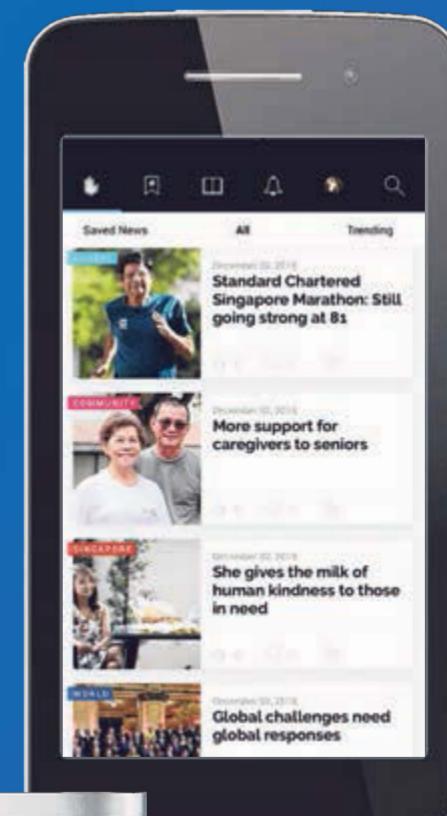
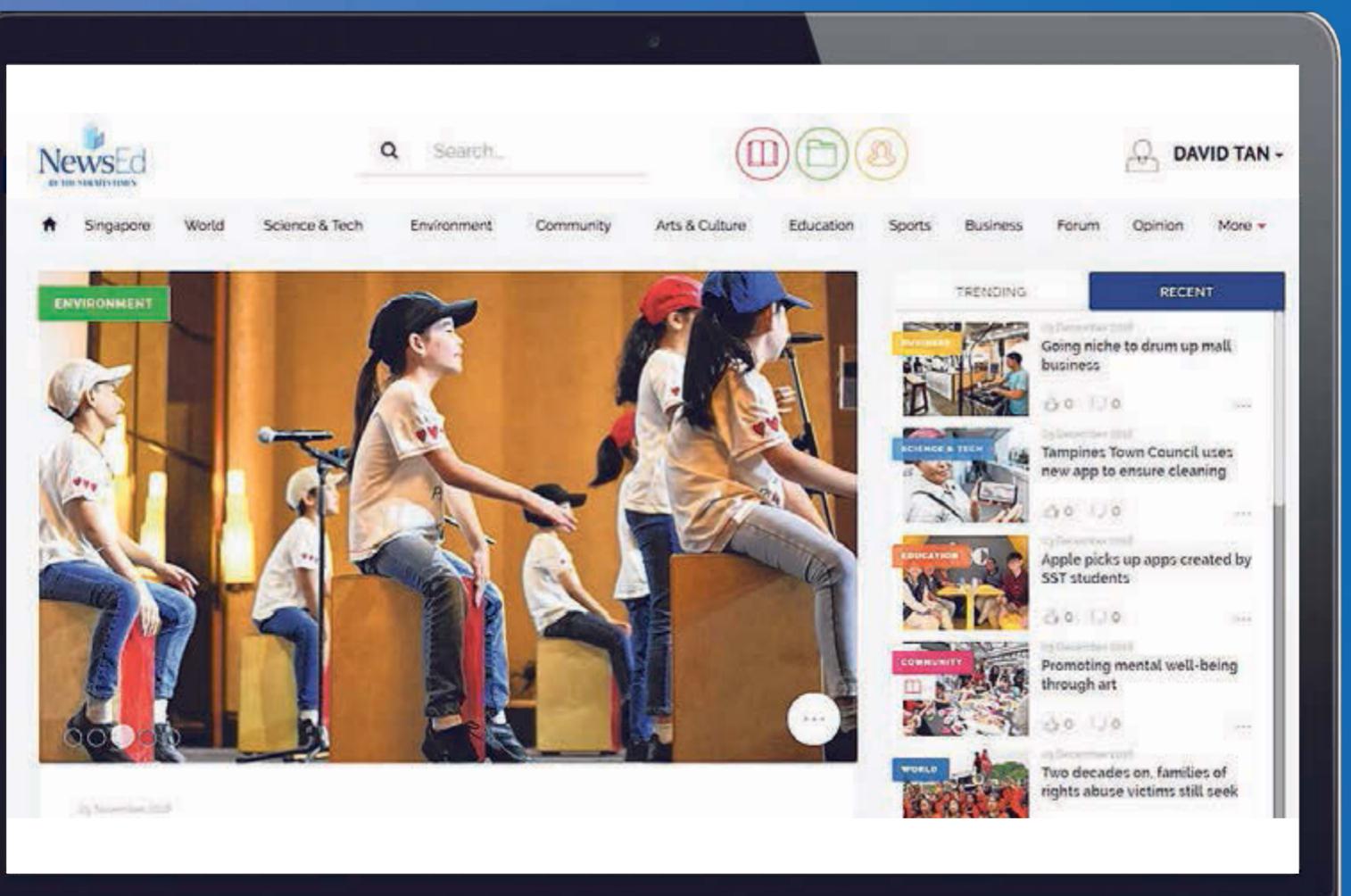
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# Singapore qualified to mark its own exams

Barely a year after A-level scripts were stolen in Britain, O-level scripts have gone missing (32 O-level Additional Maths scripts lost in Britain; Jan 15).

The nagging question on everyone's mind is, after all these years, can't we mark our own exam papers?

The need to rely on Cambridge University's established reputation to boost the credibility of our educational qualifications was understandable in the first 50 years of our development.

But as a First World Country whose education system is ranked among the best in the world, we should be confident enough to mark our own exam scripts by now.

The loss of exam scripts may

seem trivial to adults, but to students who spent sleepless nights preparing for their exams, the potential ordeal of having to retake the paper is anything but so.

This is not to mention the fact that students have to pay to sit these exams.

We have enough eminently qualified academics in Singapore to mark exam scripts.

This will remove the potential hassle of exam scripts being lost overseas.

Our students have benefited from the rigorous standards set by Cambridge University.

It is time now to take a leap of faith and be confident in our own ability as we venture forward on our own.

**Seah Yam Meng**

**We have enough eminently qualified academics in Singapore to mark exam scripts... It is time now to take a leap of faith and be confident in our own ability as we venture forward on our own.**

## Mark exam scripts here to avoid mishaps

Barely a year after the theft of A-level Chemistry exam scripts in November 2017, another unfortunate incident has been reported, this time involving O-level Additional Mathematics scripts going missing (32 O-level Additional Maths scripts lost in Britain; Jan 15).

Procedural loopholes need to be closed to prevent such mistakes from recurring.

Given that the majority of examiners are not situated in Cambridge itself, Cambridge Assessment could work with universities across the country to engage them as marking centres.

This way, all the exam scripts can be kept under lock and key in a few locations to reduce the chances of loss or theft.

What the repeat incident suggests is that it may be high time Singapore shares, or even entirely takes over, the task of marking its

national exam scripts.

To adhere to Cambridge's marking standards, we can invite Cambridge examiners to train Singaporean educators in the precision used to grade our national papers.

As a nation that produces its share of high-achieving academics and specialists, and one that does well in virtually every global assessment of mathematics and science, there is little reason to doubt our ability to deliver the requisite level of assessment.

Admittedly, this would require a high level of coordination, logistical arrangement and commitment from the various parties.

But it is worth considering if it would put an end to these mishaps. For Cambridge Assessment, this would represent a sincere show of effort to remedy a blunder that happened under its watch.

**Amanda Jane Yap (Ms)**

## Bouquets

### Data breach didn't affect care at SGH

SingHealth has been taking flak for the slip-ups in cyber security, but I would like to thank SingHealth and, in particular, the Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

SGH and its team of healthcare professionals were wonderful in taking care of my father. He was admitted in a critically ill condition to SGH when the cyber attacks were revealed and the hospitals were beefing up their cyber security.

The team of doctors in charge of his care worked to ensure that he was comfortable. They also showed a great deal of sensitivity and patience.

It is comforting to note that while the information technology might have failed, the "human hardware" of the staff is robust and running well.

**Nanthini Kunaratnam (Ms)**

### Police help to locate missing son

I would like to thank Sengkang Neighbourhood Police Centre officers who responded to my cry to find my 14-year-old son on Jan 6. They managed to locate him during their patrols.

My son's form teacher in Compassvale Secondary School also deserves praise for the effort he put in to help my son.

**Tan Eng Hwa**

### FORUM ONLINE

#### SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE: Police respond according to threat.

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## Curb pet sale, make selling of rescued animals mandatory

That the impulsive buying of pets should be made harder and measures be put in place to effect this are views we at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) agree with.

The point was raised by Mr Ong Junhai in his Forum letter (Make buying pets impulsively harder instead; Jan 8).

Over the years, the authorities have tightened up pet shop regulations to do just that, although, for now, some of the rules apply only to selected species and it still remains fairly easy to buy an animal from a pet shop.

However, seeing how we are still facing a significant pet overpopulation, we need to look

beyond traditional ways of thinking.

In an increasing number of countries, laws are being introduced to restrict the sale of pets and mandate the sale of rescued animals.

SPCA supports such a system. One of the arguments against this idea is that restricting the sale of

live animals in shops will create an "illegal supply chain".

We cannot let this deter us from doing what is best for animal welfare in Singapore.

If such a trade should emerge, swift and decisive action must be taken against it.

Numerous shelters and foster homes across Singapore are filled

with unwanted pets and street animals waiting for good homes.

If even just a portion of the animals sold or adopted from pet shops are rescued animals, many more lives can be saved.

**Jaipal Singh Gill (Dr)**  
Executive Director  
Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

## Existing measures protect consumers in Open Electricity Market

We refer to Mr Tan Teck Lee's letter in which he asked about how electricity retailers are licensed and whether consumers are protected when a retailer exits the Open Electricity Market (Protect consumers against electricity retailers that pull out; Jan 10).

The Energy Market Authority (EMA) assesses all electricity retail

licence applications stringently. The assessment criteria include management expertise, financial capability, risk management, customer service management and compliance with rules and regulations.

Participation in the Open Electricity Market (OEM) is not mandatory.

Retailers who wish to participate are required to undergo further evaluation and fulfil additional requirements set by EMA.

EMA has measures in place to protect consumers should a retailer exit the market.

Consumers will not face any disruption to their electricity supply as their accounts will be

automatically transferred back to SP Group.

Consumers can also choose to switch to another retailer of their choice.

Residential customers' security deposits are protected by business insurance or banker's guarantees, and will be refunded to them after outstanding charges

are deducted.

In addition, the exiting retailer is not allowed to collect early contract termination charges from their customers.

**Dorcus Tan**  
Director  
Market Development & Surveillance Department  
Energy Market Authority

**WRITE IN:** Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit the letters. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to [stforum@sph.com.sg](mailto:stforum@sph.com.sg). Readers can also respond to letters via Facebook and Twitter.

# PICTURE THIS



ST PHOTO: ARTHUR LEE

## 1st air-con supermarket

Fitzpatrick's supermarket in Orchard Road opened in August 1958, and shoppers were able to buy food and household items in air-conditioned comfort for the first time. The chain was acquired by Cold Storage in 1985. The building was later torn down and Paragon mall now stands on the site.

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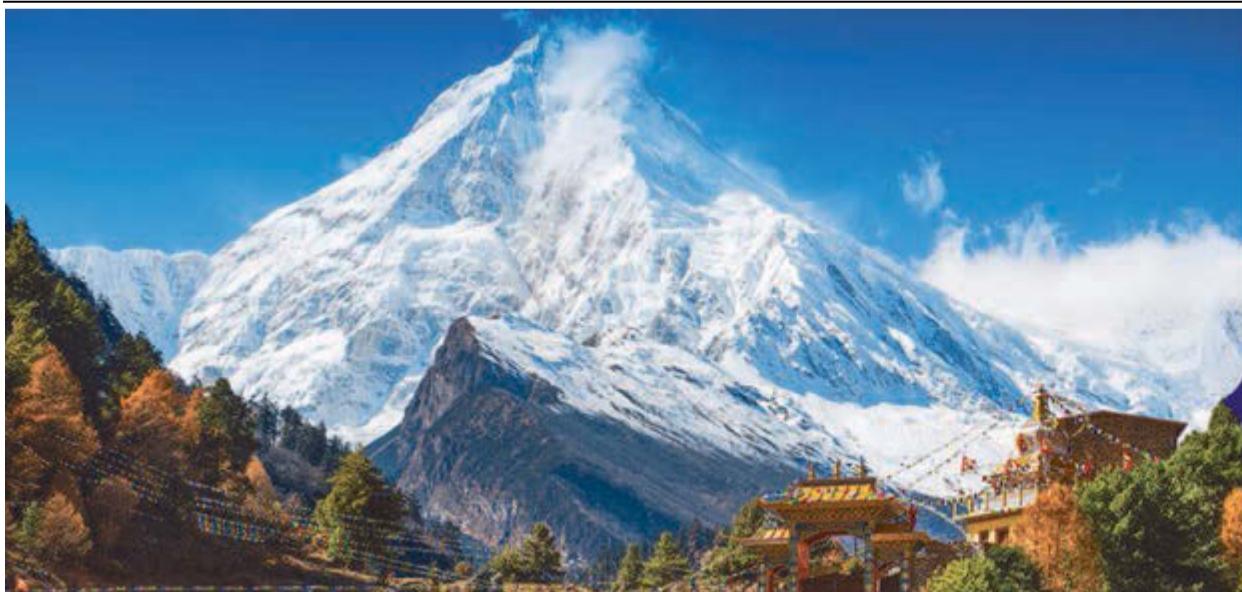
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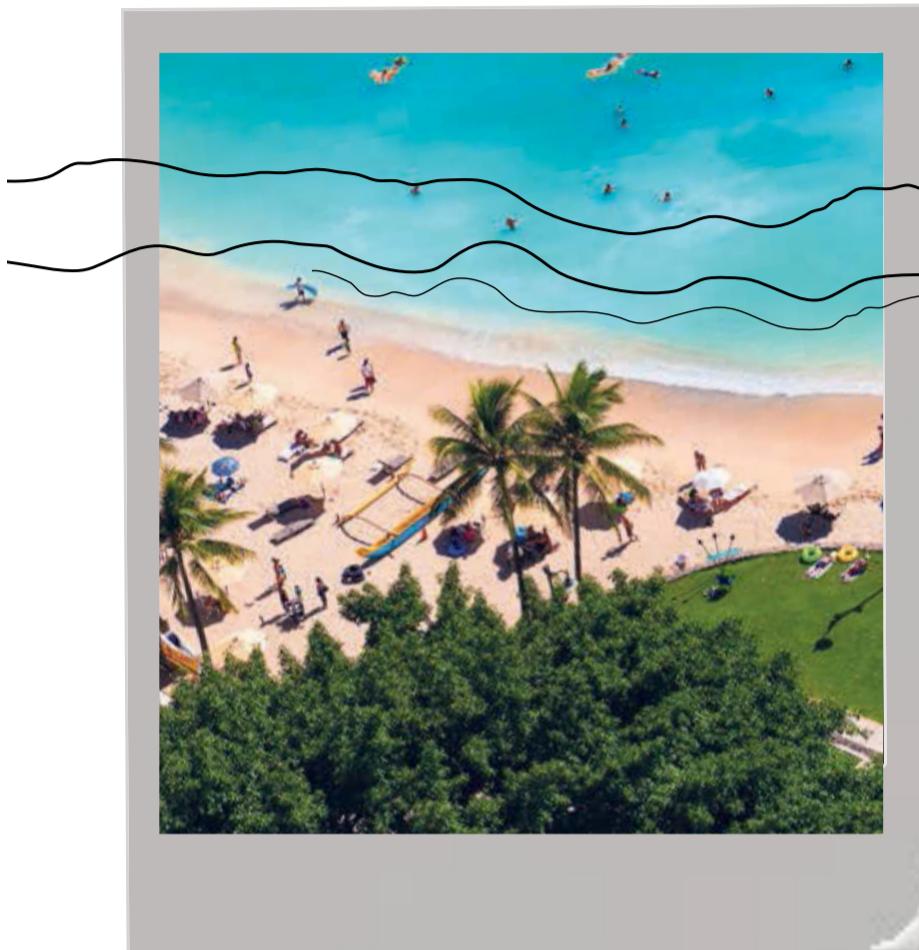


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## Editor's note

Making lists and setting goals seem to go against the grain of travelling, the whimsical notion of simply packing your bag and jetting off.

Be it to escape the daily grind or to beat your friends to an Insta-worthy destination, travelling is an enchanting activity everyone wishes to experience.

In this issue, we share a "travel bucket list" – places we feel you should visit at least once in your lifetime.

This is not about where your travel buddy wants to go, what your parents want to do and what your spouse wants to eat. The focus is on you and what your heart desires.

Akin to the lists Morgan Freeman's and Jack Nicholson's characters in the movie *The Bucket List* tick off, you should have your own collection of holiday destinations.

Listing the places you wish to go to and working towards making it happen is taking travel-planning a step further than simply throwing a dart at a map each time you've got leave days to clear.

From dipping your toes in the waters off the pebble beach in Dubrovnik to taking in a bird's eye view of Bagan while riding a hot air balloon, this issue brings you vacation spots and activities that go beyond your typical eat-and-shop weekend getaway.

Read on and may you discover your own travel bucket list.

### HEAD OF CREATIVE

Tommy Lim

### CONTENT STRATEGY

#### DIRECTOR

Grace Sung

#### EDITOR

Nur Syahiidah Zainal

#### ASSISTANT CONTENT

#### ART DIRECTOR

Benjamin Soh

### WRITERS

Bryant Chan, Joshua Wong,

Luke Tan, Michelle Bong,

Michelle Chin, Nivani

Elangovan, Tay Hwee Peng

### ADVERTISING SALES

Angeline Foo (9685 9598)

Serene Tang (9621 9268)

Veronica Chong (8127 8929)

Jasmine Lim (9732 9276)

Jason Hoon (9339 0656)

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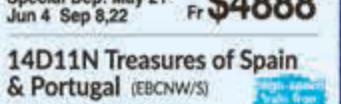
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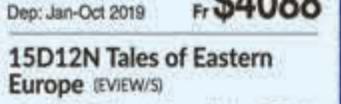
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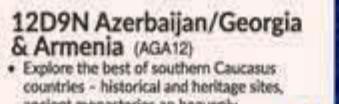


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#### EXOTICS & AFRICA



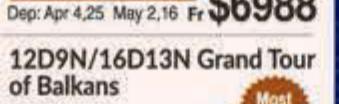
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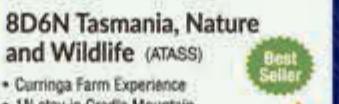


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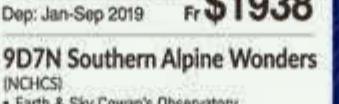
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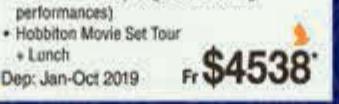
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Dep: Jan-Oct 2019 Fr \$3888\*



**11D9N Wellington, Marlborough, Kaikoura & Aoraki Mt Cook (NZW11)**  
• Explore the famous wine producing region - Marlborough  
• Seafood Odyssey Cruise + Seafood Tasting  
Special Dep: Apr 26 Fr \$5088\*



**11D9N New Zealand Highlights + Farmstay (NZH11)**  
• Te Puia + Te Po (Indigenous evening performances)  
• Hobbiton Movie Set Tour + Lunch  
Dep: Jan-Oct 2019 Fr \$4538\*

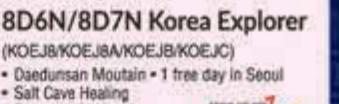


**8D6N Best of Shikoku (JBS08)**  
• Experience fruit picking and making of Japanese paper, Tosa Washi  
• Visit Iya Valley, one of Japan's hidden valley & Kazurabashi Bridge  
• Enjoy Oboke Sightseeing Boat Cruise along the Oboke Gorge  
Dep: Apr-Sep 2019 Fr \$3538\*

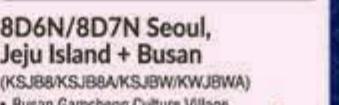
#### JAPAN & KOREA



**8D6N/8D7N Intriguing Korea + Jeju Island (KKOIB/KKOIBA)**  
• 100% meals included  
• Tour Bukchon Hanok Village in Hanok  
Dep: Mar-Nov 2019 Fr \$1608\*



**8D6N/8D7N Korea Explorer (KOEJB/KOEJB8/KOEJC)**  
• Daedunsan Mountain - 1 free day in Seoul  
• Salt Cave Healing  
• Tour Jeonju Hanok Village in Hanok  
Dep: Mar-Nov 2019 Fr \$1498\*



**8D6N/8D7N Seoul, Jeju Island + Busan (KSJB8/KSJBA8/KSJBW/KJBW8)**  
• Busan Gamcheon Culture Village  
• Jeju Yacht Tour  
• Songda Cable Car  
Dep: Jan-Nov 2019 Fr \$1738\*



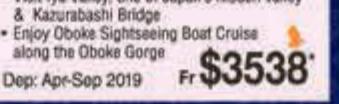
**8D6N Experience Alpine Route & Ishikawa (JEAIB)**  
• Visit Nabana No Sato Flower Park, the garden is beautiful year round  
• Experience Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route on 6 different modes of transportsations  
Dep: Apr-Jun 2019 Fr \$3438\*



**8D6N Honshu Goden Route (JHGR8)**  
• Visit Sumo Museum Kehaya  
• Visit Hamamatsu Flower Park  
• Experience Japanese folding fan making & sushi making  
Dep: Apr-Sep 2019 Fr \$3438\*



**8D7N Taiwan Family Fun (TWF08/TWF08R)**  
• Release a sky lantern with your wishes  
• Overnight at Cingjing Homestay  
• Enjoy hot spring facility at 5★ Hotel  
Dep: Jan-Jun 2019 Fr \$1948\*

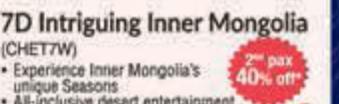


**5D Central Vietnam (VNC05)**  
• Hoi An Ancient Town  
• Son Tra Peninsula  
• Citadel Complex of Hue  
• Bana Hills French Village  
Dep: Jan-Sep 2019 Fr \$1208\*

#### CHINA/TW/VN



**8/11D Shandong + Henan Culture & Floral Trail (CTAO8/11)**  
• 5★ Hotel, Upgrade Shangri-la Hotel  
• Free Large-Scale Live Performance  
• German Cuisine (Beer is free flow)  
Dep: Mar-Jun 2019 Fr \$1038\*



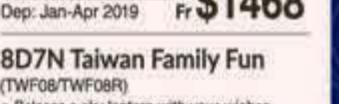
**7D Intriguing Inner Mongolia (CHET7W)**  
• Experience Inner Mongolia's unique Seasons  
• All-inclusive desert entertainment  
• Exclusive Desert Fireworks experience  
Dep: Mar-Dec 2019 Fr \$1438\*



**8/10D Zhangjiajie + Three Gorges (CDYG8B/CYZ10A)**  
• Free optional tour worth RMB700 in the Golden Cruise, inclusive of cruise tax  
Dep: Mar-Dec 2019 Fr \$1388\*



**7D6N Taiwan Spring Edition (TWN57)**  
• Cherry Blossom Trails: Aisan & Formosa Aboriginal Culture Village  
• Zhonghe Flower Market  
Confirmed Dep: Mar 2 Dep: Jan-Apr 2019 Fr \$1468\*



**8D7N Taiwan Family Fun (TWF08/TWF08R)**  
• Release a sky lantern with your wishes  
• Overnight at Cingjing Homestay  
• Enjoy hot spring facility at 5★ Hotel  
Dep: Jan-Jun 2019 Fr \$1948\*

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\*Prices exclude taxes & fuel surcharges which are correct at time of print and subject to change due to currency or fuel price fluctuations. \*For selected tours & departure dates. \*All listed confirmed departure dates are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances. T&C apply. | Taxes Fr\$80 to \$1200\* (TAS1)



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**6/8D Spectacular Sri Lanka/ Amazing Sri Lanka with Jeep Safari**

- Spice Garden • Colombo Fort
- Golden Temple of Dambulla
- Sigiriya Rock Fortress
- Nuwara Eliya Tea Plantation
- Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic
- Cinnamon Gardens

Dep: Mar - Sep 1st pax fr\$ 2688 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**8/10D Uzbekistan – Trails of the Great Silk Road / Highlights of Uzbekistan**

- Bukhara / Gijduvan / Samarkand / Tashkent / Chimgan / Khiva
- Registan Square
- Kukeldash Madrassah
- Chair lift ride to Chimgan Hills
- Ark Fortress

Dep: Mar - Sep 1st pax fr\$ 2938 2nd pax fr\$ 1469\*

**7D Glimpse of Nepal with Elephant Safari**

- Great Stupa of Boudhanath
- Chitwan National Park
- Pokhara Valley
- Gulmarg Gondola & Horse Ride

Dep: Mar - Sep 1st pax fr\$ 3088 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**7D Jeju Olle Trails with Korea Hanok Stay**

- 2 Days Olle Walking Trail
- Experience Farm Activities

Dep: Feb - Jun 1st pax fr\$ 2188 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**7D Perth & Coral Spectacular**

- Pink Lake Scenic Flyover Tour
- Mandurah Dolphin Spotting Cruise
- Pinnacles Desert

Dep: Feb - Jun 1st pax fr\$ 2888 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**7D Incredible India With Kashmir Tulip Viewing**

- Taj Mahal and Agra Fort
- Tulip Garden at Srinagar
- Gulmarg Gondola & Horse Ride

Special Dep: Apr 2, 6, 11 1st pax fr\$ 1588 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**7D Funtastic Korea**

- Mt Maisan Tapso Temple
- Yangpyeong Rail Bike

Dep: Feb - Jun 1st pax fr\$ 2088 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**11D Wonders of Mexico**

- Pyramid of Sun
- Pyramid of Moon
- Chicken Itza

Dep: Mar - Sep 1st pax fr\$ 4488 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**2-To-Go Northern Europe For All Season**

**7D Arctic Circle Experience**

- 1 night stay in Glass Igloo
- Husky Dog Ride
- Reindeer Sleigh Ride
- Visit Santa Claus Village with Arctic Crossing
- Rauna Zoo Visit

Guaranteed Dep: Feb 14, 21 Mar 7, 14, 21, 28 1st pax fr\$ 2888 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**9D Norway Magic Of The Fjords**

- Scenic Train Ride From Oslo to Flam
- Scenic Ferry From Balestrand to Bergen

Guaranteed Dep: May 8, 15, 21, 29 Jun 12 Jul 3, 17, 31 Aug - Oct 1st pax fr\$ 2588 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**10D Scandinavia & Baltics Rendezvous**

- Oversight Cruise from Stockholm to Riga
- Day Cruise from Tallinn to Helsinki

Guaranteed Dep: Jun 7, 21, 28 Jul 5, 12, 19, 26 Aug 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 1st pax fr\$ 2388 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

**10D Iceland Aurora Fantasy**

- Golden Circle Tour • Gullfoss
- Blue Lagoon • Vik Black Lava Beach

Guaranteed Dep: Feb - Apr Every Mon, Wed, Thu & Sat 1st pax fr\$ 4528 2nd pax fr\$ 0\*

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\*Selected tour packages & dep dates. \*Terms & conditions apply.

All prices are subjected to associated taxes & surcharges correct at time of print & subject to change. fr \$133 to \$709

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**PACKAGE TOURS**

**12D Classic Western USA With Antelope Canyon**

- FREE 1N in Las Vegas
- Dramatic Sweeping Views of Grand Canyon South Rim

Dep: Mar - Oct

**14D Cities of Eastern USA With Niagara Falls**

- 3N Stay in Manhattan
- Unique Culture of Amish Community

Dep: Mar - Oct

**10D Los Angeles & Las Vegas Fantasia**

- FREE 1N in Anaheim

Dep: Daily

**8/11D Eastern USA & Orlando Fantasia**

- Daily Continental Breakfast in Orlando
- 2D Disney Park Hopper

Dep: Wed, Sat

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fr \$5038

**Up to \$200 OFF Per Couple\***

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Meet & Greet by 猪炮炮  
20 Jan 2019 (Sun) 4.30pm - 5.30pm



Pan Ling Ling  
12D European Charm (EUAACE)

- ITLIS Rotair - the world's first revolving cable car
- View the largest Waterfall in Central Europe - Rhine Falls
- Zaanse Schans - Dutch Windmills & Cheese Farm

Dep: Mar 16 fr\$ 2199



7D Tasmania (ATASTC)  
Bryan Wong

- Exclusive: Freycinet National Park
- Wineglass Bay + Bicheno Blowhole
- Mount Field National Park
- Russell Falls + Horseshoe Falls
- Curringa Farm & Activities
- Mount Wellington

Dep: Sep 10 fr\$ 2988



6D Doha (ADOH6C)  
????

- Exclusive: 2 Nights City Stay
- 5★ Marriott Marquis
- Ritz Carlton or similar
- 2 Nights Resort Stay
- 5★ Sharq Village Resort by Ritz Carlton along Persia Gulf

Dep: Nov 15 fr\$ 1888



LOVE 97.2FM  
19 Jan 2019 (SAT) 4:30pm - 6:30pm

DJ Leelian Chua  
DJ Wendy Xiao Ying

**BLOSSOMS IN ABUNDANCE 花开富贵**



8D Train To Busan Tour (KREKTX)

- 5★ Hotel • 100% Meals
- Seoul To Busan (KTX Train Pass)
- Jagalchi Market
- Gamcheon Culture Village
- Geojeo Island

More Dep: 10 Apr - Nov U.P. fr\$ 1488  
Special Dep: Apr - Sep fr\$ 1188



7/8D Hokkaido + Hakodate TOUR (JHKET/8)

- Lake Toya • Lake Mashu • Lake Akan
- Bear Ranch • Noboribetsu Marine Park
- Mount Hakodate
- Mount Tengu • Hokkaido Crab • 3N Hot Spring

More Dep: 10 Apr - Nov U.P. fr\$ 2388  
Special Dep: Apr - Sep fr\$ 1888



8D Shandong/Henan+Luoyang/Xi'an/Huanghehukou Waterfall (CNTA08/CNSDMS/CNTA0C/CNHY08/CNXY1A)

- Enjoy the German Cuisine at Tsingtao Beer Brewery and sample freshly brewed beer
- No Shopping Tour\*

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 788



7/8/10D Harbin+Mt.Changbai/Mohe/Hulunbeier/Manzouli (CNOB07/CNDB08/CNDMB8/CNW08/CNBY08/CNDH08/CNOL10/CNBM11)

- St. Sophia Church
- Red Beach Island
- Hulunbeier Grassland

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 899



10D Charming Holland (EUOHD)

- Venice of the North "Giethoorn"
- Aalsmeer - The biggest flower auction
- Keukenhof - the most beautiful tulips spring garden
- 4★ Hotel

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 2199

**JOYOUS JOURNEY 一帆风顺**



8D Sydney/Melbourne (AMES8)

- 1 Night Stay at Blue Mountain
- 3 Scenic Rides
- Dolphin Cruise + 4WD Sand Dune Safari + Animal Farm
- Philip Island + Penguin March

Dep: Apr - Oct fr\$ 1899



11D/14D Highlight of Europe (EU11HE/EU1SPH)

- Ascend to Mt. Titlis/Top of Europe "Jungfraujoch"
- Experience Scenic Train Ride\*
- Lake Titisee Boat ride
- Bonus: Visit Keukenhof - the most beautiful tulips spring garden

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 1599



10D Treasures of Eastern Europe (EU10TE)

- Visit Charles Bridge
- Enjoy Hungarian Folklore show
- Visit famous Vienna Schonbrunn Palace
- See the famous Swarovski Crystal outlet

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 1199



10D Turkey (EXIST)

- UNESCO Heritage: Hagia Sophia, Cotton Castle & Goreme Museum
- Home of Whirling Dervishes + Underground City
- Ancient City: Troy, Ephesus, Pergamon

Dep: Feb - Dec fr\$ 999



17D Alaska & Canadian Rockies (EXIST)

- 7N Luxurious Princess Cruise
- 3 National Parks: Yoho, Jasper & Banff (Gondola Ride)
- Columbia Icefield + Lake Louise
- Tracy Arm Fjord + Glacier SkyWalk

Guaranteed Dep: May 6,20 Jun 10 U.P. fr\$ 5999  
Dep: May - Aug fr\$ 4888



6D Gold Coast (A00L6)

- Movieworld & Sea World

Dep: Apr - Oct fr\$ 1199



10/12D Romantic Italy (EU10R/ EUA01)

- Ascend to Mt. Titlis/Top of Europe "Jungfraujoch"
- Experience Scenic Train Ride\*
- Lake Titisee Boat ride
- Bonus: Visit Keukenhof - the most beautiful tulips spring garden

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 1399



11D Amazing Balkan/Twin National (EUA0B/EU1BT)

- Visit Charles Bridge
- Enjoy Hungarian Folklore show
- Visit famous Vienna Schonbrunn Palace
- See the famous Swarovski Crystal outlet

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 1699



10/12/15D Scandinavia & Russia/Iceland (EU10R/ EU12C/ EU15R)

- Visit Charles Bridge
- Enjoy Hungarian Folklore show
- Visit famous Vienna Schonbrunn Palace
- See the famous Swarovski Crystal outlet

Dep: Apr - Oct fr\$ 2399



13D Egypt + Nile + Red Sea (EXCA1)

- 100% Meals / 5★ Hotels

Dep: Feb - Oct fr\$ 1899



6D Cairns & Beyond (ACNIS)

- Visit Charles Bridge
- Enjoy Hungarian Folklore show
- Visit famous Vienna Schonbrunn Palace
- See the famous Swarovski Crystal outlet

Dep: Apr - Oct fr\$ 2099



11D Amazing Spain & Portugal (EUAASP)

- Visit Charles Bridge
- Enjoy Hungarian Folklore show
- Visit famous Vienna Schonbrunn Palace
- See the famous Swarovski Crystal outlet

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 1699



10/12/15D Treasures of Eastern Europe (EU10TE)

- Visit Charles Bridge
- Enjoy Hungarian Folklore show
- Visit famous Vienna Schonbrunn Palace
- See the famous Swarovski Crystal outlet

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 1199



10D Turkey (EXIST)

- UNESCO Heritage: Hagia Sophia, Cotton Castle & Goreme Museum
- Home of Whirling Dervishes + Underground City
- Ancient City: Troy, Ephesus, Pergamon

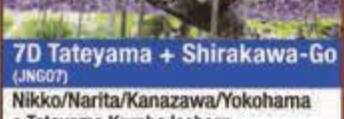
Dep: Feb - Dec fr\$ 999



11D USA West Coast (US00UF)

- 7N Luxurious Princess Cruise
- 3 National Parks: Yoho, Jasper & Banff (Gondola Ride)
- Columbia Icefield + Lake Louise
- Tracy Arm Fjord + Glacier SkyWalk

Guaranteed Dep: May 6,20 Jun 10 U.P. fr\$ 5999  
Dep: Now - Dec fr\$ 2699



7D Tateyama + Shirakawa-Go (JNG07)

- Nikko/Narita/Kanazawa/Yokohama
- Tateyama Kurobe Iceberg (Include 6 transportation)
- 1N Hot Spring • Kenroku-en Garden
- Mitsui Outlet Park • Shikaga Flower Park

More Dep: 19 Apr - Jun 19 U.P. fr\$ 2699  
Special Dep: Apr 17,18,24 fr\$ 2399



8D Dreaming of Korea + Jeju (KR80KR)

- ALL 5★ HOTEL • Bibap Show
- Nami Island • Everland Theme Park
- O'Sulloc Museum • Wear Korea Costume
- Trick Eye • Ice Gallery • Hello Kitty Land
- Aqua World • DIY Experience

More Dep: 16 Mar - Nov 19 U.P. fr\$ 1288  
Special Dep: Mar - Oct fr\$ 828



8D Taiwan + Alisan (TW8LVI)

- Wu Fen Pu • Sun Moon Lake
- Cinjing Farm • Sky Lantern • Taipei 101
- Hualian (East Coast Scenic Rail)
- Unesco Heritage Site - Taroko Gorge
- 3 Fairy Platform & East Ocean
- Shopping Liuh & Fengjia

More Dep: Feb 15 - Dec 19 U.P. fr\$ 1299  
Special Dep: Feb - May fr\$ 998



8/10D Zhangjiajie/Phonix City + Chongqing/Yangtze River/Wulong (CNCX08/CNCX09/CNCXGA)

- 4 Nights stay in 5★ cruise
- Experience Zhangjiajie Crayon
- Visit "Avatar" film shooting place

Dep: Mar - Dec fr\$ 788



5/6/7D Guangzhou + Macao/Zhuhai Shenzhen/Zhongshan/Kaiping (CNCM05/CNCM06/CNCX07)

- Wu Fen Pu • Sun Moon Lake
- Cinjing Farm • Sky Lantern • Taipei 101
- Hualian (East Coast Scenic Rail)
- Unesco Heritage Site - Taroko Gorge
- 3 Fairy Platform & East Ocean
- Shopping Liuh & Fengjia

More Dep: Feb 15 - Dec 19 U.P. fr\$ 1299  
Special Dep: Feb - May fr\$ 998



8D Scenic Central Japan (JOS0N) + Universal Studios

- Mitsui Outlet Park • Shikaga Flower Park

Dep: Feb 1 - Dec 31 fr\$ 2288



8D Winter of Korea + Jeju Island (KR8WSF)

- ALL 5★ HOTEL • Bibap Show
- Nami Island • Everland Theme Park
- O'Sulloc Museum • Wear Korea Costume
- Trick Eye • Ice Gallery • Hello Kitty Land
- Aqua World • DIY Experience

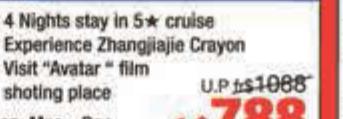
Dep: Feb 1 - Mar 15 fr\$ 998



8D Busan + Jeju Island Tour (KR8PUS)

- ALL 5★ HOTEL • Bibap Show
- Nami Island • Everland Theme Park
- O'Sulloc Museum • Wear Korea Costume
- Trick Eye • Ice Gallery • Hello Kitty Land
- Aqua World • DIY Experience

Dep: Feb 1 - Dec 31 fr\$ 1138



6D Make It Taiwan (TPE0TW)

- Wu Fen Pu • Sun Moon Lake
- Cinjing Farm • Sky Lantern • Taipei 101
- Hualian (East Coast Scenic Rail)
- Unesco Heritage Site - Taroko Gorge
- 3 Fairy Platform & East Ocean
- Shopping Liuh & Fengjia

Dep: Feb 1 - Dec 31 fr\$ 498



8D Charming of Taiwan (TW8CRT)

- Wu Fen Pu • Sun Moon Lake
- Cinjing Farm • Sky Lantern • Taipei 101
- Hualian (East Coast Scenic Rail)
- Unesco Heritage Site - Taroko Gorge
- 3 Fairy Platform & East Ocean
- Shopping Liuh & Fengjia

Dep: Feb 1 - Dec 31 fr\$ 758



5/6/7D Guangzhou + Macao/Zhuhai Shenzhen/Zhongshan/Kaiping (CNCM05/CNCM06/CNCX07)

- Wu Fen Pu • Sun Moon Lake
- Cinjing Farm • Sky Lantern • Taipei 101
- Hualian (East Coast Scenic Rail)
- Unesco Heritage Site - Taroko Gorge
- 3 Fairy Platform & East Ocean
- Shopping Liuh & Fengjia

More Dep: Feb 15 - Dec 19 U.P. fr\$ 1299  
Special Dep: Feb - May fr\$ 998



8D Guangzhou/Zhuhai/Guilin+ Guizhou (CNGL08/CNGL09/CNGX08)

- Wu Fen Pu • Sun Moon Lake
- Cinjing Farm • Sky Lantern • Taipei 101
- Hualian (East Coast Scenic Rail)
- Unesco Heritage Site - Taroko Gorge
- 3 Fairy Platform & East Ocean
- Shopping Liuh & Fengjia

More Dep: Feb 15 - Dec 19 U.P. fr\$ 1299  
Special Dep: Feb - May fr\$ 998



5/8D Beijing+Chengdu (CNCPE5/CNCPE8)

- Wu Fen Pu • Sun Moon Lake
- Cinjing Farm • Sky Lantern • Taipei 101
- Hualian (East Coast Scenic Rail)
- Unesco Heritage Site - Taroko Gorge
- 3 Fairy Platform & East Ocean
- Shopping Liuh & Fengjia

More Dep: Feb 15 - Dec 19 U.P. fr\$ 1299  
Special Dep: Feb - May fr\$ 998



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4N Malaysia & Phuket Cruise fr\$ 449

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8N Circle Hokkaido + 1N Tokyo fr\$ 2288

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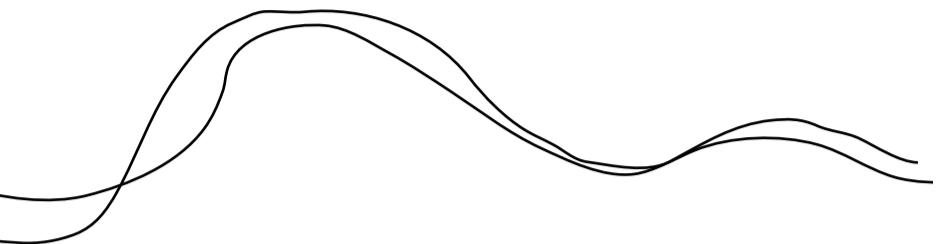



PHOTOS: CLUB OCTAGON, ISTOCK

# Wild nights all around the world

Three hot spots for the party animal to let their hair down

NIVANI ELANGOVAN



Here are some key clubbing spots around the world that might inspire you to detour to party city.

## Gangnam, South Korea

Seoul's most upscale neighbourhood was catapulted into the international spotlight thanks to rapper Psy's surprise hit, Gangnam Style, in 2012.

Gangnam's main draw is its luxurious take on nightlife, which makes for an unmatched clubbing experience. International DJs, including Nic Fanciulli and

Denis Koyu, are flown in regularly to headline sets at well-known clubs like Octagon.

Conveniently located in the basement of New Hilltop Hotel, Club Octagon is a musically diverse venue — world-class DJs spin everything from electronic dance music to trap and tech-house. This is a great place for celeb-spotting: the club has hosted album launch parties for international stars such as Maroon 5 and Eminem.

The club derives its name from its décor — the venue is peppered with octagon-accented items,

from tables and seats to lights.

Get ready to spend some serious cash for all that luxe fun: a VIP room at Octagon starts at 1 million won (SGD \$1213).

**FOR MORE INFO:**  
[www.octagonseoul.com/](http://www.octagonseoul.com/)

## Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Dancers, floats, samba and one big parade — nothing screams 'party' quite like the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

The annual extravaganza takes place in early March, and is a country-wide celebration ▶

**Nam Ho Travel**

## CELEBRATING LUNAR NEW YEAR

**Taiwan**

**5D Taiwan Good Fortune (TWSCNY)**  
• Toucheng Leisure Farm  
• Release Sky Lantern  
• Strawberry Ranch  
CNY Dep: Feb 4,5,6

**8D I ❤ Taiwan (TWBTW)**  
• 1N stay Toucheng Leisure Farm  
• Taitung Hot Spring Resort  
• Lunch @ Taipei 101-85th floor  
Dep: Feb 13,16,17,20,24,27 Mar-May

**Thailand**

**4/5/6D Bangkok Khao Yai Discovery (TH4BK/TH5BK/TH6BK)**  
• Palio Mall, Asiatique Night Bazaar  
• Agro Tour & Western lunch @ Farm Chokchai  
• Magic Cave, DIY @ Secret Art Garden

(5D) CNY Dep: Feb 2  
(6D) CNY Dep: Feb 1 Dep: Mar-Jun

**5D4N Chiang Mai Chiang Rai (TH5LC)**  
• Long Neck Woman Village, White Temple  
• Mekong River, Golden Triangle  
• Elephants at Work, Elephant Safari

CNY Dep: Feb 1,2,5 Dep: Mar-Jun

**Japan**

**7D5N Beautiful Shirakawa-Go (JPG7W)**  
• Shirakawa-go Gassho Village  
• Kiyomizudera Temple, Mt. Fuji 5th Station  
• Photo-taking session with Geisha  
Sakura Dep: Mar 25,28,29,30  
Dep: Feb 4,9,16

**9D Chubu Cherry Blossom Special (JPC9)**  
• Nachi Waterfall  
• Shirakawa-go Gassho Village  
• Kusatsu Onsen Town  
Sakura Dep: Mar 25,28 Apr 1,3

**Malaysia**

**1D Durian Tour (MY1PDS)**  
• Dimsum Breakfast  
• Pineapples & Bee Farm  
• Durian Buffet  
• Aeon Jusco Shopping Mall  
Dep: Feb-Jun

**4D Cameron Highlands/Ipoh (MY4CHI)**  
• 1N stay in Strawberry Park Resort  
• Palas Boh Tea Plantation  
• Rose Valley, Strawberry Farm  
• Kellie Castle, Sam Po Tong Temple

CNY Dep: Feb 6

**Korea**

**8D Iconic Korea (KR8BB)**  
• Mt. Jangbok Sculpture Park  
• Yeojwacheon Stream and Bridge  
• Kyungwha Train Station, Bomun Lake  
Dep: Mar 28,29,30,31 Apr 1,2,3

**8D Inspiring Korea (KR8IPJ)**  
• Everland, Jeju Horse Riding  
• Seokguram Grotto  
• Gyeongbokgung Palace  
• Oryukdo Skywalk, Spa Land Centum City  
CNY Dep: Feb 2,3,4,5  
Dep: Feb-Jun

**Indonesia**

**4/5D Bandung Tour (IND4B)**  
• Tangkuban Parahu Volcano  
• Ciater Hot Spring  
• Geological Museum  
• Strawberry Farm, Coffee Luwak Plantation  
• Old Cangkuang Temple, Factory Outlets  
CNY Dep: Feb 3,4,6,8

**4D3N Classic Lake Toba Getaway (IND4B)**  
• Parapat, Sultan Palace • Tomok Village  
• Lumbini Gardens, Golden Stupa  
• Sibayak Volcanoes, Hot Spring  
• Sipiso-piso waterfall  
• Ambarita Village, Chinese Temple

CNY Dep: Feb 2,3,4

**China**

**5D Guangzhou/Foshan/Zhongshan/Zhuhai Gastronomic Tour (CNYGZ5)**  
• Foshan Temple, Shijingshan Park  
• Wong Fei-hung Martial Art Museum  
• Foshan Lion Dance & Martial Arts Performance

CNY Dep: Feb 3

**8/9/10D Shandong + Henan Flora & Delicacy Tour (CNSDP8/P9/P10)**  
• Tai'er Zhuang Ancient City, Red Rock Gorge  
• Nishan Holy Land Cultural Tourism Resort  
• Shimeian Scenic Area, Darning Lake New District  
• Black Tiger Spring, Tao Hua Yuan, Caozhou Peony Garden

Flora Dep: Apr 8,9,10

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of music and dance. Samba dancers throng the streets and are incredibly hard to miss, decked out in jewel-encrusted headdresses, feathered wings and unbelievably high heels.

Off the streets, the celebrations are just as lavish. Multiple Carnival Balls take place throughout the city, and while a costume is not a must, most don one anyway to add to the spirit of the celebrations.

One ball worth attending is the Cordão do Bola Preta Carnival Ball, which is dedicated to one of Rio's most famous samba street bands of the same name and is one of the oldest balls in Carnival. Come clad in a costume that

matches its black-and-white dress code, and soak in its party atmosphere with live performances and deafening sing-alongs.

**FOR MORE INFO:** [www.rio-carnival.net/EN/EN](http://www.rio-carnival.net/EN/EN)

### Amsterdam, The Netherlands

With many famous electronic dance music artists, including Tiësto, Martin Garrix and Afrojack, calling it home, it's no surprise that Dutch capital city Amsterdam houses so many premier clubbing spots.

One unique location is De School, a former school building that has been converted

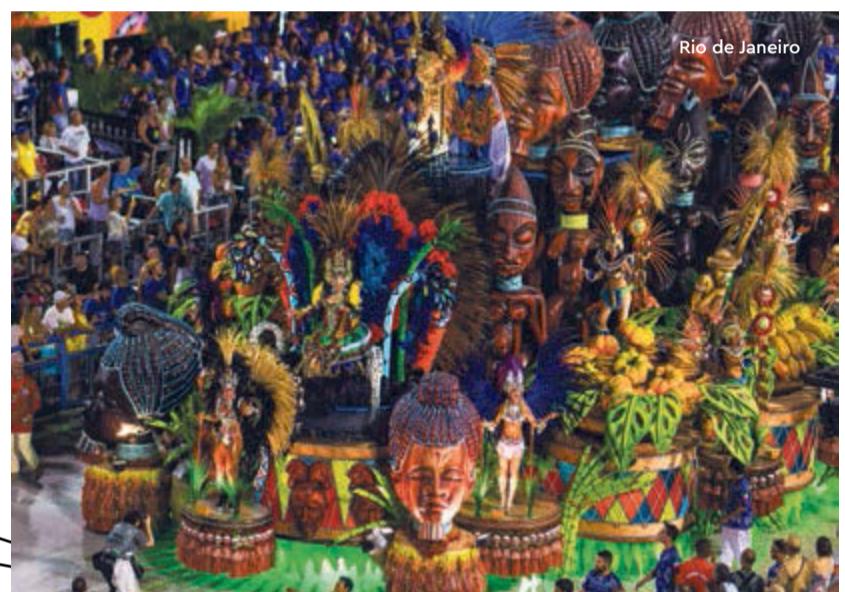
into a club, restaurant, cafe and gym.

With a license to operate around the clock, clubgoers can show up early in the day to get the party started with a visit to De School's gym, Het Gymlokaal, for a bout of capoeira or kickboxing before hitting the club later in the evening for the latest in electronic music.

De School also has a no-photography policy, which means guests can have the freedom to really let down their hair, as what happens in the school stays there.

**FOR MORE INFO:** [www.deschoolamsterdam.nl/en/](http://www.deschoolamsterdam.nl/en/)

*Every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home*  
Matsuo Basho



Rio de Janeiro

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**3 Nights Penang-Langkawi Cruise (Sun)** fr \$349\* (per person)

\*Fare shown is per person based on twin-sharing in an Interior Stateroom and excludes gratuity fee \$42-\$63 and taxes of \$75-\$80 per person. Terms & Conditions apply.

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 Booking period: 01 – 31 Jan 2019  
 Selected Sailing period: 27 Jan till 17 Mar 2019

**5 Nights Surabaya-North Bali or Penang-Phuket-Langkawi-Kuala Lumpur or Myanmar-Phuket Cruise (Sun)** fr \$630\* (per person)

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# Hit the road, Jack

Drive off into a glorious sunset with these road trips  
**LUKE TAN**

If the phrase "road trip" only conjures up images of families emerging from rented MPVs for toilet stops on the Malaysian North-South Highway, maybe it's time to look further afield to swathes of jaw-dropping scenery, winding tracks along sheer cliff edges, and other experiences reserved for true adventurers.



PHOTOS: ISTOCK

## Transfăgărășan, Romania - 90km

For a relatively easy start, how about The Transfăgărășan – literally "through the Făgăraș Mountains" – the road motoring journalist Jeremy Clarkson once called "the best in the world"?

A good first stop is Căpânenii Pământului, home to the Poenari castle, which was inhabited by the "original Dracula", Vlad the Impaler, on which author Bram Stoker based his legendary character in 1897. It is also where the winding roads with hairpin turns lead to the Vidraru Dam, one of Europe's largest hydroelectric plants. Look for the Prometheus-shaped pylon and the lake below, which is a stunning counterpoint to endless natural gorge views.

Before you reach the top, where Lac Balea offers cabins, restaurants and an ice hotel in winter, snap a picture-postcard shot of the expansive valley and serpentine road below. Finally, it's a spectacular drive down to Cartisoara, where the museum of Romanian national hero Badea Cârtan makes for a good stop.

Just remember that the Transfăgărășan is a driver's road, and still requires a healthy dose of attention and respect. Rent a good car or motorbike to enjoy it with, but keep an eye out for the numerous sharp and blind curves and hairpin turns.

**FOR MORE INFO:** [www.romaniatourism.com/scenic-drives-romania-transfagarasan.html](http://www.romaniatourism.com/scenic-drives-romania-transfagarasan.html) ▶

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**3 Nights Cruise (Sun) Penang-Langkawi Penang-Phuket** Fr \$349\* per person

**4 Nights Cruise (Mon) Koh Samui-Redang** Fr \$490\* per person

**5 Nights Cruise (Sun) Nha Trang – Ho Chi Minh or Redang – Sihanoukville – Bangkok or Surabaya – North Bali or Penang – Phuket – Langkawi – Kuala Lumpur or South Palawan – Kota Kinabalu or Kota Kinabalu – Brunei** Fr \$468\* per person

T&Cs: Fares exclude taxes of \$50 - \$145 and gratuity fees of \$42 - \$130 per person. Other terms and conditions apply. Jan - Oct 2019 sailing.

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Prices / Information is correct as of 7 Jan 2019. \*Terms & conditions apply.



Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve is home to several native Australian wildlife species.

# Canberra's must-visit locations

**Say hello to family-friendly fun in Australia's capital**



Cockington Green Gardens features miniature buildings from across the world.

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The Australian capital of Canberra is well-known as the centre of the Australian story and political activities, but it's also a fun and family-friendly destination.

Listed by Lonely Planet as the third-best city to visit in 2018, Canberra offers unique outdoor adventures, breathtaking natural beauty and vibrant festivals.

With flights available on daily basis on Singapore Airlines, it is always easy to plan for a family trip to Canberra. First and Business Class passengers can select a range of meals from Yummy!, an in-flight meal service that even your picky little eaters will enjoy. Families travelling in the Economy Class need not fret as you would still be able to select a child meal before your flight.

What's more, the in-flight entertainment system KrisWorld will keep the family occupied with more than 1,800 on-demand options including movies, TV programmes, audio CDs and interactive games.

Once you land in Canberra,

amazing experiences await your family:

## Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

About a 40-minute drive from the city, the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve showcases some native Australian wildlife including koalas, kangaroos, possums, wallabies and emus. If you're lucky, you might even spot an elusive platypus.

Enjoy a scenic drive or trek through the reserve. You can also join a ranger-guided walk or activity. Kids will love the Nature Discovery Playground, where they can engage in activities such as pumping water like a pioneer.

PHOTOS:  
VISIT CANBERRA



## Festivals and events

Canberra transforms into a hive of activity during the Enlighten Festival (right). Over 17 nights from March 1, the city turns into a vibrant arts precinct, with live music, roving entertainers, interactive installations and architectural projections.

During the Canberra Balloon Spectacular, the city's skyline is dotted with colourful hot-air balloons for nine mornings starting on March 9. The best views are from the lawns of the Old Parliament House.

## Cockington Green Gardens

Be transported to more than 30 countries at Cockington Green Gardens, which features a fascinating display of miniature buildings from all over the world. Admire the meticulous attention to detail in crafting the tiny structures and surrounding gardens. Check out the Waverley Dolls House, and don't miss taking a ride on the miniature steam train.



## Pod Playground

Located at the National Arboretum Canberra, Pod Playground (left) features giant acorn cubbies, nest swings and banksia pods. Let the kids have fun, while the adults relax with a coffee and snack, and taking in stunning views of the city.

Singapore Airlines flies daily from Singapore to Canberra. You can now plan your family vacation with promotional fares starting from S\$528. For more information, visit [singaporeair.com/Canberra](http://singaporeair.com/Canberra)



Fly to Canberra, where there's truly something for everyone. From floating 2,000 feet above the city in a hot air balloon to spotting native wildlife, no Australian itinerary is complete without a trip to its capital city. And when you travel with us, you enjoy an award-winning service even before you arrive.

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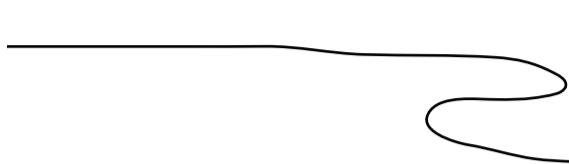
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### North Coast 500 – 850km

A seemingly endless panoply of castles, whisky distilleries, and breathtaking coastal scenery — the North Coast 500 offers all these and more unexpected treats besides.

This circular route traverses six regions, starting and ending at Inverness-shire, home to picturesque riverside walks set to traditional live music and the best of Scottish cuisine, from Aberdeen Angus beef to salmon, shellfish and black pudding. Where's the whisky to wash it all down with? Head over to Easter Ross's three malt distilleries, including the famed Glenmorangie. On the other hand, craft beers from Scotland's only organic brewery can be found at the Black Isle, which also offers dolphin-sea-and-bird-watching opportunities.

Be amazed by Wester Ross and Caithness, where the coastal landscape reveals shrouded peaks one moment and craggy rocks the next, before ending in gleaming beaches.

Itching for a challenging drive? Try the Bealach na Bà – Pass of the Cattle. This winding single-track road offers beautiful views as it peaks at of 626 metres above sea level. Forget any rally shenanigans – this road is very narrow, and becomes impassable in winter.

**FOR MORE INFO:** [www.northcoast500.com](http://www.northcoast500.com)



*The world is a book, and  
those who do not travel  
read only a page*

*Saint Augustine*

### Karakoram Highway, Pakistan to China – 1,500km

The 1,300-km Karakoram Highway is not for the faint of heart, but it's likely to win yours – if you can conquer it first.

Begin at the southern towns of Rawalpindi or the capital, Islamabad, before the Hunza Valley's stunning snow-capped mountains. At Karimabad, stop for a cuppa at the Cafe de Hunza (which boasts both a delicious walnut cake and fast internet access) and discover the Altit and Baltit forts, once home to the hereditary rulers of the Hunza state. If you are staying the night, a hike to the Ultar Base Camp is in order for its jagged peaks and majestic glacier.

As you proceed eastwards, Attabad Lake is worth a stop for its beautiful turquoise waters and colourful boats, which used to be the only way across the Hunza River until a tunnel section was completed in 2015.

Near the Khunjerab Pass on the Pakistani border is a national park, home to snow leopards and Himalayan ibex. Past the border crossing's imposing white stone arch, you're in China and not far from the end point in Kashgar, but before you reach its bustling Sunday bazaar, Mor pagoda and Id Kah mosque, spend one final night in this mesmerising region at Tashkurgan, visiting Lake Karakul if you can.

**FOR MORE INFO:** [www.tourism.gov.pk/adventure\\_tourism.html](http://www.tourism.gov.pk/adventure_tourism.html)

# Epic adventures in New Zealand

Explore the country's North and South Islands for a winter journey full of surprises



Go on a scenic alpine flight and land on one of the stunning peaks.

BY JAC WOO

"The world is not in your books and maps. It's out there," says Gandalf the wizard to Bilbo Baggins in the movie *The Hobbit — An Unexpected Journey*, which was filmed in New Zealand.

Perhaps you, too, should create your own epic, unexpected journey to explore this spectacular country.

Embark on it from June to August if you want to escape Singapore's hot weather and can't wait till the year-end to find your surreal winter wonderland.

#### For shutterbugs

There is plenty of breathtaking scenery worthy of your own movie — the landscapes of New Zealand seem to be made for blockbusters.

Take your pick from geothermal valleys and glacial lakes to rustic coastal villages and dramatic mountain peaks.



PHOTOS: TOURISM NEW ZEALAND, VISIT RUAPEHU

#### For snow lovers

For fun-filled winter entertainment, head to Queenstown's annual Winter Festival from June 20 to 23, and watch the Dog Derby (a race for dogs and owners), competitive mountain exploits, fireworks and polar lake plunging.

For family-friendly winter playgrounds, Mount Ruapehu (above) is where you find New Zealand's largest ski area and one of the best ski and snowboard slopes

for beginners. Go for ski and snowboard lessons, try sledding, or take a chairlift ride to New Zealand's highest café to chill out with a scenic meal.

For snow sport enthusiasts, some of the best ski regions include Mount Hutt, Queenstown and Ohau.

#### For foodies

There are many gourmet trails where you can wine and dine in style.

The most prized of oysters — Bluff oysters — are found near the town of Bluff, hence their name. The best time to enjoy them is from March to August. Don't miss the annual Bluff Oyster and Food Festival on May 25, which is held, of course, in Bluff.

Visit cheese factories, meet artisan cheese-makers and take up a cheese-making course. Waikato is home to many of the country's best-established cheese-makers.

Unwind with wine tasting and cellar excursions in scenic locations such as Marlborough (the largest wine-growing region in New Zealand) and Hawke's Bay (the country's oldest wine region).

#### For explorers

You can venture to different regions in New Zealand easily by car, train, coach, plane or ship.

For an exhilarating adventure, opt for the Fox Glacier Heli Hike tour, where you take a helicopter flight, land on the glacier and go on a guided hike through the spectacular icescape.

Wherever you choose to explore, your epic journey in New Zealand will definitely be magical.

As Gandalf tells Bilbo before his journey: "You'll have a tale or two to tell when you come back."

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For more information, visit [airnewzealand.com.sg](http://airnewzealand.com.sg) and [singaporeair.com/newzealand](http://singaporeair.com/newzealand)



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Terms and Conditions: The advertised fare is per person in Economy Class, and includes the price of the air ticket, as well as associated taxes and surcharges. Fares quoted are subject to change due to currency fluctuation. Fares are available for sale from now to 4 February 2019, or when the seats sell out. Fares quoted are for travel out of Singapore from 1 March to 30 June 2019 for Auckland and Wellington. An advance purchase of 30 days is required for Christchurch. Blackout periods and other terms and conditions apply. For full terms and conditions, refer to [airnewzealand.com.sg](http://airnewzealand.com.sg) or [singaporeair.com/newzealand](http://singaporeair.com/newzealand).



PHOTOS: ISTOCK

From Asia to the Americas, here are four top historical and cultural hot spots to visit  
**JOSHUA WONG**

Curious  
Curious  
Curious

**H**istory fascinates you. You love exploring locations that are laden with heritage and rich with the patina of years gone by. Exploring different cultures is exciting, and you can spend hours marvelling at art or wandering the streets of an Old World city.

If this sounds like you, look no further — here are four ideas for your next overseas excursion

### 1. Bagan, Myanmar

With the opening up of Myanmar in the past decade, many less explored gems in the country have come to light.

The capital of the mediaeval Pagan Empire

from the 9th to the 11th centuries, Bagan is less crowded than its famous cousin, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, but is no less spectacular. It is home to the remains of over 2,200 temples and pagodas dating back to that era, sprawling over 104 sq km.

Do not miss the beautiful Ananda Pagoda, with its Indian architectural influences. It features four large statues of Buddha and a variety of exquisite carvings and decorations.

You can hire an electric bicycle to tour the ruins — many of which can be entered and explored — at your own pace. The best times to visit are at sunrise and sunset, when the rays of the sun cast a

hauntingly beautiful glow over the scene. For a panoramic view, you can also opt to see the sights from the basket of a hot-air balloon.

**FOR MORE INFO:**  
[www.tourism.gov.mm/attractions/destinations/bagan/](http://www.tourism.gov.mm/attractions/destinations/bagan/)

### 2. Seville, Spain

If you are looking for the quintessential Spanish cultural experience, head to Seville, a city brimming with history and culture in the southern region of Andalusia.

Founded in pre-Roman times, the city was ruled by the Romans, the Visigoths and the Moors, and was even besieged by Viking

raiders in 844. It was later conquered during the Spanish Reconquista and became part of the Christian kingdom of Spain, but retains much of its Moorish heritage in its architecture.

Seville's Old Town alone boasts three Unesco World Heritage Sites in the space of 4 sq km.

The Alcazar palace complex is the oldest royal palace still in use in Europe.►



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- Ascend Mt Titlis by Rotair\* • Eiffel Tower 2nd Level\* • Amsterdam

Special Dep: Mar 12 May 9,13,16 Jun 9,13 Sep 12,26 Oct 3,10  
Dep: Mar-Oct

**trs 0\***  
(1st Pax: \$2348)

**11/13D Romancing Eastern Europe + Cesky Krumlov\*** (ESEA11/EVE13)

- Schonbrunn Palace Entrance Ticket\*

Special Dep: Apr 11,29 May 12,19,26 Jun 1,2,9,16  
Dep: Apr-Jun

**trs 0\***  
(1st Pax: \$2308)

**11/12/13D Best of Western USA + Taipei\*** (USL11/USA12/TAI13/US13/12)

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Dep: Jan-Jun

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**10D Best of Turkey** (TST10)

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- Visit UNESCO Heritage Sites: Hagia Sophia, Cotton Castle

Dep: Jan-Oct

**trs 0\***  
(1st Pax: \$2298)

**13D Romancing Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia + Montenegro** (EZAG13)

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Special Dep: May 14,21 Jun 4  
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- Ape's Den • Toledo Tour\*

Cfm Dep: Apr 4  
Dep: Mar-Sep

**trs 0\***  
(1st Pax: \$3498)

**12/13/14D Best of Eastern USA & Canada + Niagara Falls / Mont Tremblant** (UJFK12/UJFK13/UJFK14/UMON14)

- Lunch at Skylon Tower's

Dep: Jan-Jun

**trs 2038\***  
(1st Pax: \$5018)

**6/7D Gold Coast & 2/3 Worlds + Farm +/ Dolphin** (AOOL8/AOOL7/AOOL7/AMOD8)

- Dreamworld\* • Abalone tasting
- Movie World • Sea World

Cfm Dep: Mar 8  
Dep: Mar-Sep

**trs 888\***  
(1st Pax: \$1948)

**13D Best of Egypt & Red Sea** (ECN13/ECN13F)

- Camel Ride to marvel the UNESCO Pyramids of Giza

Special Dep: Feb 8 Mar 8 Apr 18,30  
Dep: Feb-Sep

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Dep: Mar-Oct

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Dep: Apr-Sep

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Dep: Jan-Mar 2020

**trs 1588\***  
(1st Pax: \$3188)

**8D Best of Seoul, Jeju + Mount Sorak** (KSELN1SEF)

- Ascend Mount Sorak on cableways
- Dogs Sledding Experience + Fruit Picking • Sheep feeding and DIY cheese making

Dep: Mar-Md Nov

**trs 758\***  
(1st Pax: \$1538)

**6D CNY in Wenzhou, Mt Yandang, Ningbo, Shaoxing /Shanghai, Wuzhen/Fuzhou** (MECN6/MESH6/MWYF6/CNFE6)

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CNY Cfm Dep: Feb 6

**trs 328\***  
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**8D Siberia Lake Baikal Railway Experience Tour+Beijing** (RSTB8/BST8)

- Circum-Baikal Railway Day Excursion
- Russian's Military Jeeps Experience
- Upgrade 3N in 5\* Hotel

Dep: May-Sep

**trs 1988\***  
(1st Pax: \$3328)

**16/18/22D Alaska Fairbanks, Denali/Canadian Rockies Tours** (PIP16RPS816/PS816/RPC722)

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- 5N Canadian Rockies Tour

Dep: Apr 30 May 10,17, 27,31 Jun 14 Sep 6

**trs 4588\***  
(1st Pax: \$6288)

**7/8D Best of Central Japan** (UTYOTUOSATUTOUR)

- Tsukiji Fish Market • Tokyo Disneyland • Universal Studios
- Mount Fuji • Todaiji Temple & Nara Deer Park

Dep: Jan-Mar 2020

**trs 1558\***  
(1st Pax: \$3118)

**8D Korea Winter + Jeju** (OSHNO HAKKAI VILLAGE)

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- Mount Sorak National Park

Dep: Jan-Early Mar

**trs 788\***  
(1st Pax: \$1508)

**6D CNY Beautiful Guizhou Maotai/Chishui** (NY286)

**6D CNY Scenic Guilin + Yangshuo** (NY296)

- Xijiang Miao Village

CNY Special Dep: Feb 4

**trs 388\***  
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- Cfm Dep: Sep 17

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**8D Let's Go Shandong** (SDCQ6/SDMS8)

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Dep: Apr-Oct

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\*Selected tours & departures; conditions apply. Prices, taxes & fuel surcharges are subject to change & may vary according to departure dates & choice of airline. Information is correct as of 16 Jan 2019. Departure dates are subject to point of group assembly. All gifts & promotional offers are valid for fairground and new bookings only, whilst stocks last. All payment for Citibank promotions must be made by Citibank credit cards. Other conditions apply.





Originally a Moorish fort, it was rebuilt in the 14th century as a royal palace by King Peter of Castile, and features beautiful elements of Moorish architecture.

Seville Cathedral, completed in the 16th century, is one of the world's largest cathedrals, occupying 23,500 sq m. It houses the remains of Christopher Columbus — who founded the first permanent European colonies in the Americas — and Ferdinand III of Castile, the king who wrested Seville from Moorish control in 1248.

Finally, the General Archive of the Indies is a repository of rare documents relating to the Spanish colonial empire in the Americas and the Philippines, including the journal of Christopher Columbus and maps of Spanish colonies.

You can catch performances of flamenco, a distinctively Andalusian dance, at many places around Seville, and sample

authentic local cuisine at the city's many tapas bars.

For the full Seville experience, visit during Semana Santa (the week before Easter) when various religious brotherhoods stage processions featuring ornately decorated floats and icons.

**FOR MORE INFO:**  
[www.visitsevilla.es/en/](http://www.visitsevilla.es/en/)

### 5. St Petersburg, Russia

Nicknamed the Venice of the North due to its many canals, St Petersburg is Russia's

historical and cultural capital. Founded in 1703 by Czar Peter the Great, it was the capital of the Russian Empire for over two centuries (from the 1700s until 1918, when the Soviets relocated the capital to Moscow).

Many of its buildings date back to the 18th and 19th centuries, evoking a sense of grandeur and charm.

It is home to a variety of museums, monuments and theatres such as the State Hermitage Museum (one of the largest art museums in the world, housed in

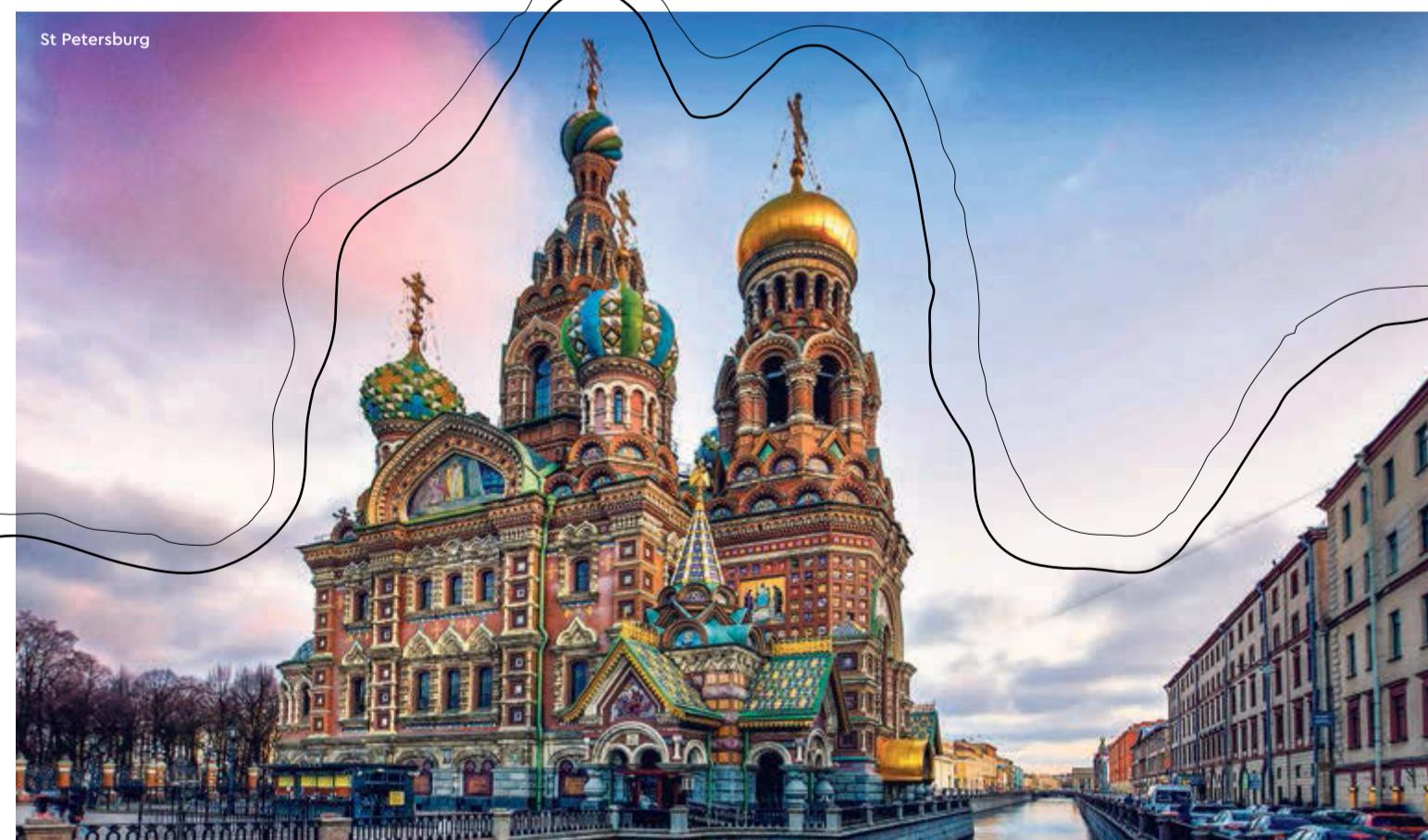
the Winter Palace built by Peter the Great in the 18th century) and the Peterhof Palace (also built by Peter the Great in the 18th century, and called the Russian Versailles due to its gardens and water features).

You can also marvel at Russian Orthodox churches such as St Isaac's Cathedral and Church of the Savior on Blood, built on the site of Czar Alexander II's assassination in 1881 by terrorist revolutionaries.

**FOR MORE INFO:**  
[www.visit-petersburg.ru/en/](http://www.visit-petersburg.ru/en/)

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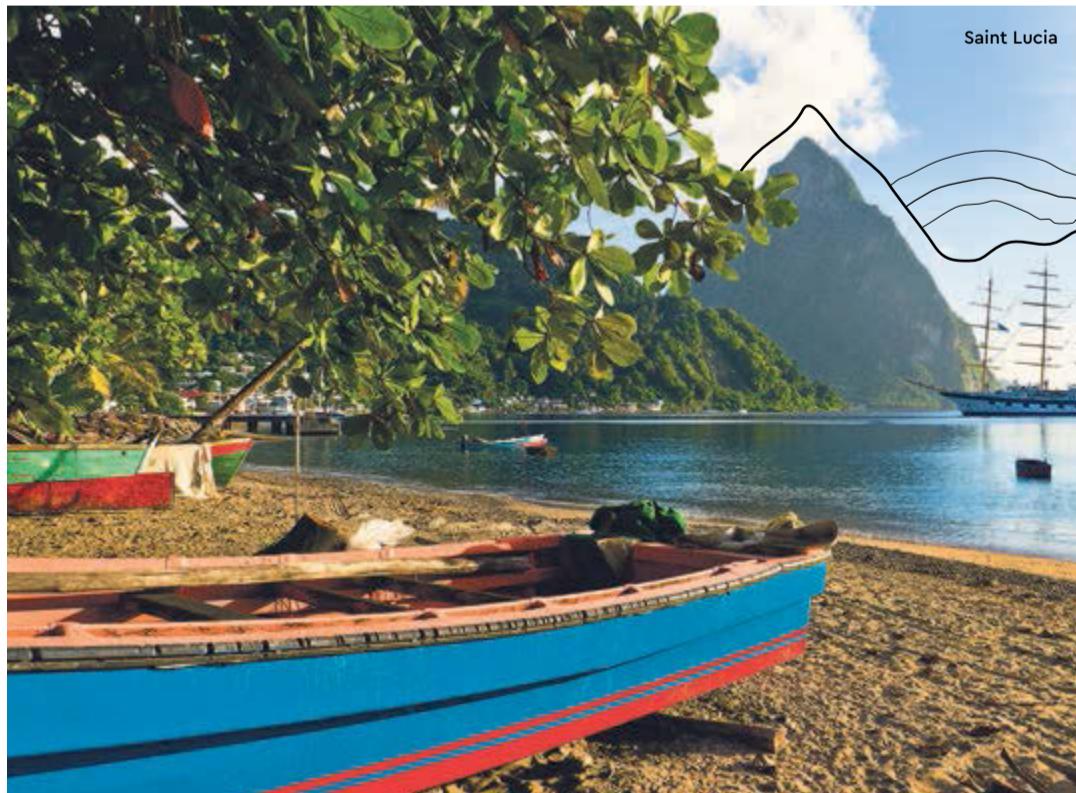
The GOOD Life

Terms and conditions apply.

# Romantic escapes for two

For a truly intimate getaway, here are four enchanting locations to swoon over

**MICHELLE BONG**



**D**off-season holidays to quaint towns with cobblestone streets, intimate rooftop restaurants with blazing sunsets as a backdrop and picturesque locales with breathtaking sights are the stuff romantic getaways are made of.

**Dubrovnik**  
Live out your fairytale dreams and feel time stand still at this UNESCO World Heritage location that is also one of the best preserved medieval cities in the world. Pop into secret bars built into ancient city walls, dine at tiny rooftop restaurants and take in beautiful sunsets at Pile (say "pee-leh") Harbour, known for its pebbled beaches and Game Of Thrones vibe. Make time also for a moonlit swim at off-the-beaten-track St Jakov's Beach, and explore the cobblestone streets of Dubrovnik Old Town where beautiful architecture and ancient stone walls dominate.

## **Saint Lucia**

This tropical paradise in the Caribbean ticks all the boxes for a holiday you can tell your grandkids about. Live it up at a luxe, adults-only resort set in the rainforest where you will feel like you are in your own private universe. Or while away the hours lazing on beautiful black and white sand beaches, sipping bubbly on a private yacht and exploring secluded coves and bays. The evenings will stretch on over leisurely dinners — candle-lit of course. ▶

*All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveller is unaware*  
Martin Buber



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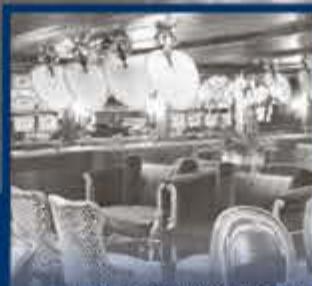
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## Marrakech

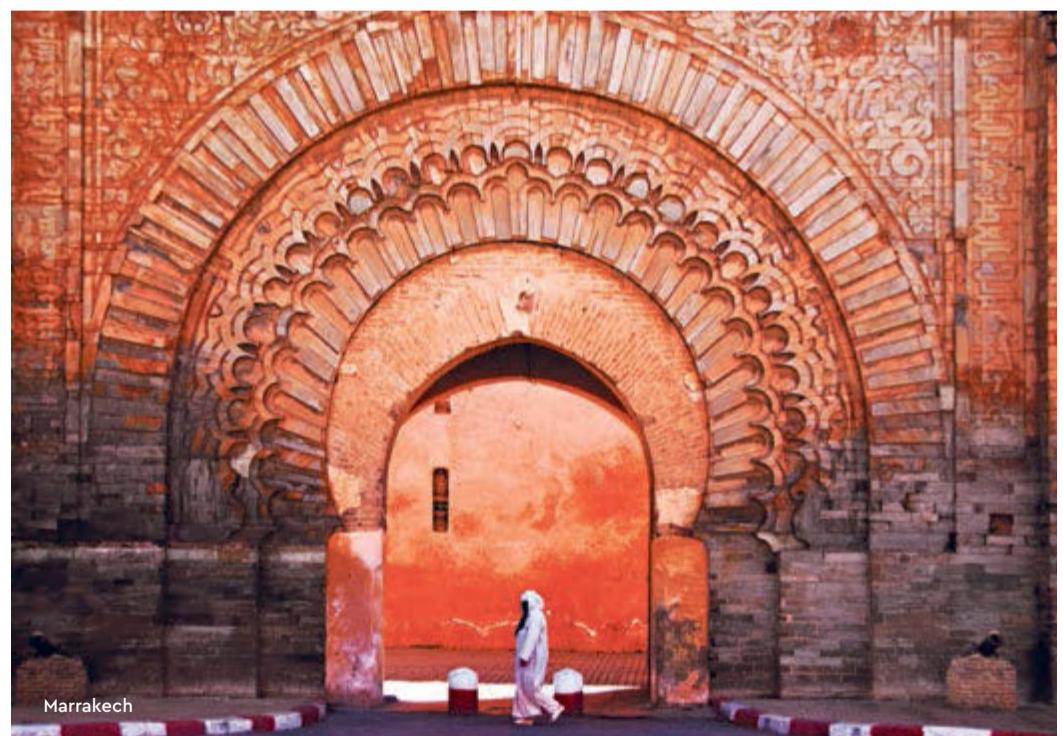
Lush gardens and tranquil courtyards set within beautiful riads (traditional townhouses) — these alone promise an unforgettable getaway for two in this exotic Moroccan city. Spend days wandering hand-in-hand along labyrinthine alleys, enjoying the heady fragrance of orange blossom and saffron as stall-holders call out to you at souks (traditional marketplaces) teeming with traditional textiles, antiques and jewellery. Take refreshment at rooftop restaurants, offering views of iconic Koutoubia Mosque (a 12th-century landmark known for its Moorish minaret) and the majestic Atlas Mountains. For a change of scene, visit Ouzoud Falls (the highest waterfalls in North Africa) where you can swim or take a boat ride, or steal kisses at the popular Jardin Majorelle, a stunning two-and-a-half acre botanical garden designed by French Orientalist artist Jacques Majorelle.

## Fiji

Synonymous with romance, there's something about Fiji that makes you want to dance to music along a pier, hold hands and snorkel over beautiful coral reefs, or reconnect over long walks along the coastline showcasing island flora and fauna. The fact that it limits guest numbers means you almost feel like you are on your own private island. Hike to nearby Taveuni Island to frolic under waterfalls, shop at open-air markets for souvenirs or enjoy peaceful tranquility in your pretty bure (elegant Fijian-style cabins) perched over pristine lagoons.

*Only by going alone in silence, without baggage, can one truly get into the heart of the wilderness. All other travel is mere dust and hotels and baggage and chatter*

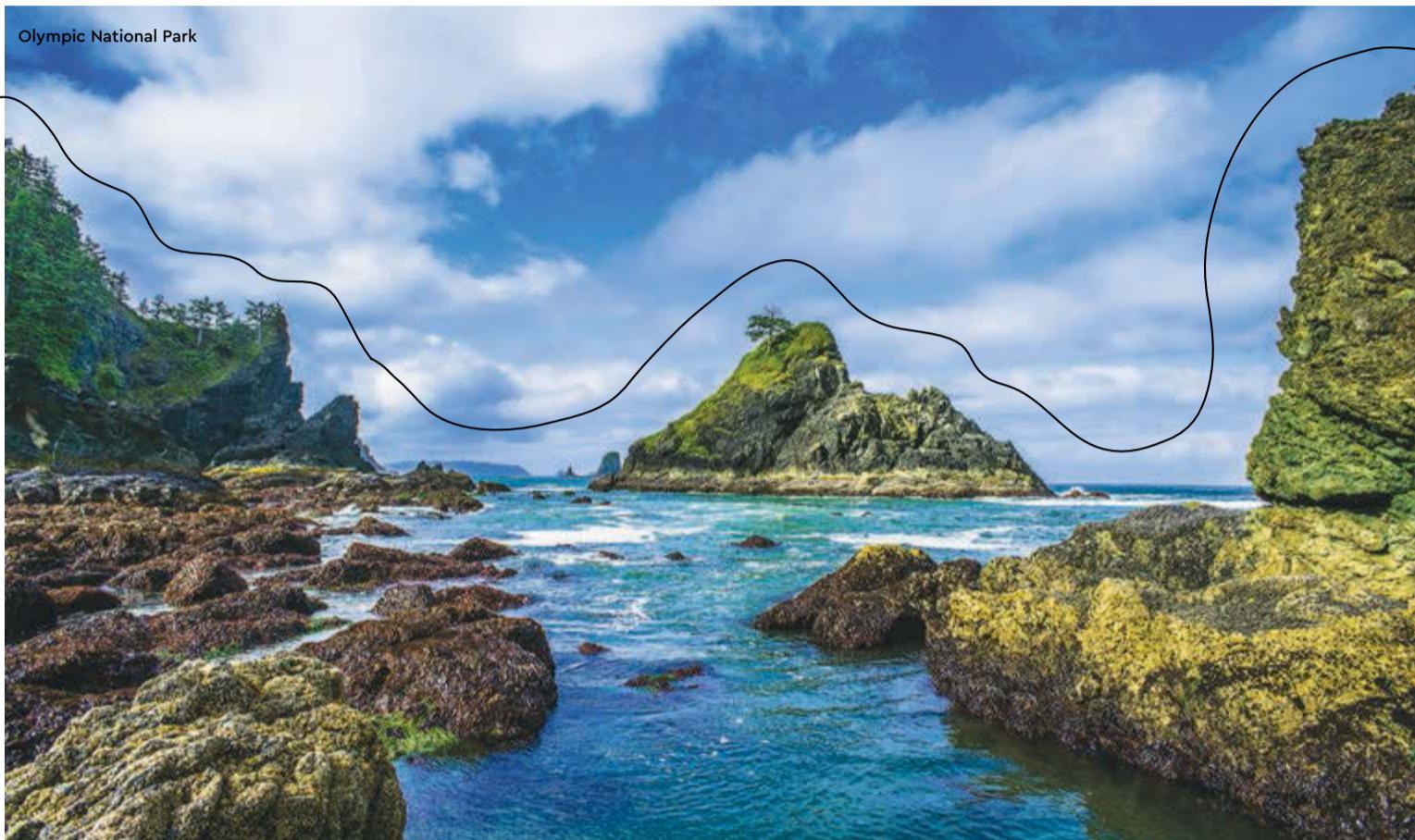
John Muir



This image is a promotional flyer for the EU TRAVEL EXPO, featuring a "GRAND OPENING SALE" for a new flagship store. The top right corner proclaims "Voted Singapore's No.1 Europe & USA Travel Agency". The EU Holidays logo is at the top left, and the Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre is mentioned as the venue. The main headline "GRAND OPENING SALE" is in large, bold letters, with "NEW FLAGSHIPSTORE" below it. To the right, there's a "GRAND LUCKY DRAW" section with three prize categories: 1st Prize (Europe Tour), 2nd Prize (8D Uzbekistan Tour), and 3rd Prize (8D Korea Tour). Below the main headline are sections for "NEW DESTINATION" (Ethiopia, Iran, Lake Baikal), "BEST SELLER" (Italy, Switzerland, Paris, London, Dubai), and "EUROPE, USA & EXOTIC" travel packages. The bottom half of the flyer features a "Follow us! We Follow the Lights!" section for Arctic Aurora Specialist trips, along with "ENJOY UP TO 50% OFF\* 2ND PAX" offers and a "BUY 1 GET 1 FREE" deal. The entire flyer is filled with travel itineraries, prices, and small images of travel destinations.

# Nature's treasures

**BRYANT CHAN** recommends some of the world's natural wonders off the beaten path



PHOTOS: ISTOCK

**N**eed an escape from the buzz of city life? Heed the advice of American naturalist John Muir in his seminal work *Our National Parks*: "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."

Here are some of the best "fountains of life" to rejuvenate your body, mind and soul.

## Lantau Island, Hong Kong

Contrary to popular belief, Hong Kong is not all glass skyscrapers and shopping arcades. The various trails that snake through the region's mountains and hills are a hiker's paradise. The longest of them, the MacLehose Trail, leads trekkers on 100km of Hong Kong's famed Country Parks to discover the other side of the city.

While the 987m-tall Tai Mo Shan may be the highest peak in the Hong Kong region, its view of the sunrise cannot compare to that of Lantau Peak on Lantau Island, the second highest mountain in Hong Kong.

Most hikers stay overnight at one of the

hostels in the highland region of Ngong Ping, before setting off at 4am to catch the sunrise on Lantau Peak at 6am. Tough as it may seem, but the reward is worth the effort.

## Olympic National Park, United States

You could probably put any of the 58 national parks in the US on this list and it would not be out of place. But even among them, the Olympic National Park in Washington state stands out as the jewel of the Pacific Northwest.

The rich biodiversity on the Olympic peninsula is among the highest

in the United States due to thousands of years of geographic isolation. Temperate rainforests line the coast, while dense pine groves reside further inland. Marine wildlife such as the giant green anemone and Dungeness crab make their homes in the tide pools that dot the shore.

With such diversity, you could essentially have three different adventures in one day. Spend the morning scaling the rocky crags of Hurricane Ridge, laze the afternoon away by the Sol Duc River's rushing rapids, and end the day beachcombing the pristine sands of Ruby Beach, as the sun dips into the sea.►

*A good traveller has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving*

*Lao Tzu*



Lantau Island

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CNY Dep: Feb 5,26

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## The Dolomites, Italy

While the Dolomites may not be as famous as other mountain ranges across the world, such as the Rocky Mountains in the US and the Annapurna massif in Nepal, every mountaineer worth his salt owes it to himself to pay homage to these iconic crags.

The Dolomites are home to some of the most spectacular geological formations in Europe. Most come drawn by the promise of seeing the Tre Cime di Lavaredo — the "holy trinity" of the Dolomites — which is by far the most recognisable. But other peaks are just as impressive, such as the Sassolungo, which sprouts majestically from the earth like the prow of a ship.

For those who want more of a thrill beyond what hiking, rafting and cycling can offer, the Dolomites are home to several via ferrata — climbing routes of steel cables, often suspended hundreds of feet above the ground. The views they offer are unparalleled, but they are definitely not for the faint-hearted.

## Lake Wanaka, New Zealand

The silhouette of Lake Wanaka's lone tree rising from its waters has become iconic; cemented in collective consciousness, thanks to its constant presence on Instagram feeds.

But pictures alone cannot do the beauty of Lake Wanaka justice. As anyone who has been there can testify, the star of the South Island is much more than just its tree. Autumn's paintbrush turns the surrounding hills into a fiery landscape of golds, reds and oranges, making it an absolutely gorgeous vista to witness.

The Roys Peak Track is the best way to see the foliage up close. The 16km track takes hikers on a steady climb through acres of verdant meadow and farmland. At the end of it lies a panoramic view of Lake Wanaka and its bays and islands, framed by the snow-capped mountains of the Southern Alps.

*The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes*  
Marcel Proust



## Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia

Salar de Uyuni is one of the most unearthly places on the planet. Drive deep enough into the white expanse of this salt flat in the Daniel Campos province — the largest salt flat on Earth — and the horizon will simply melt away into infinity.

It may seem like an inhospitable environment, but Salar de Uyuni actually teems with wildlife. A major breeding ground for flamingos, the salt flat is also home to a variety of bird life, as well as mammals such as the culpeo and Bolivian vizcacha.

Salar de Uyuni is at its most beautiful after the rain. Its flat terrain transforms it into a giant mirror, turning it into a surreal reflection of the sky. Also, because of the lack of surrounding geographical features and distance from urban light sources, it is a fantastic place for astrophotographers to take pictures of the Milky Way.

Salar de Uyuni



# Tips to stay healthy while you travel



## 1. Stay rested

While it is tempting to maximise your days abroad by starting early in the day and returning late at night, do remember that travelling takes a physical toll on your body.

Ensure that you slow your pace down, take as many breaks as you need and get enough sleep.

## 2. Stay hydrated

Drinking enough water is one of the things we forget while on the go. The solution: carry a filtered water bottle and fill it up as you go along. This is especially useful if you are travelling to a destination where water from the tap may not be safe for consumption.

## 3. Stay balanced

Trying to eat a balanced meal daily can be extremely difficult when you are constantly moving from one spot to another and tempting new dishes are readily available on each street corner. Bring along daily multi-vitamins to supplement your meals.

Also, for your own peace of mind, pack a personal first aid kit with items such as bandages, antibiotic cream, over-the-counter pain relievers and any other prescription medication you may need, including those for your allergies or common travel illnesses such as colds, diarrhoea or motion sickness. This is especially crucial if you are going to places where medical services are not readily available.

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# Excite your tastebuds

If you are a foodie and keen to venture beyond Michelin-starred, air-conditioned restaurants, check out these cities whose street food cultures have a lot to offer

TAY HWEE PENG



PHOTOS: ISTOCK

## Taipei: Street food paradise

Taiwan, is home to delicacies such as oyster mee sua, lu rou fan (braised pork on rice), stinky tofu, deep-fried Taiwanese chicken cutlet, pig's blood cake and bubble tea. The list goes on.

Singaporeans are familiar with Taipei's famous Shi Lin Night Market, but equally popular among the locals are Rou He Night Market, Hua Xi Night Market and Ning Xia Night Market. The alleys in Xi Men Ding also offer many choices for the hungry traveller.

While the portions are relatively smaller than those in Singapore, few people can resist the temptation to try more than one item during their tours of the night markets.

No doubt many Taiwanese bubble tea brands have set up shop in Singapore, but a sip of the made-in-Taiwan beverage will take your bubble tea experience to a whole new level.

For bubble tea lovers travelling to

Taichung, you may want to make a trip to the world's first Taiwanese bubble tea shop. It was opened in 1983 by former government employee Liu Han-chieh who came up with the idea of adding ice and sugar to tea in a cocktail shaker.

Taiwanese stinky tofu is another dish whose taste cannot be easily replicated anywhere else in the world.

As Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore were once part of the Majapahit Empire, an Indianised kingdom in South-east Asia based in Eastern Java that ruled from the 13th to 16th centuries, these three countries share similar street food culture. But the Indonesian rendition of many mouth-watering snacks will re-awaken your tastebuds.

One popular snack is bamboo sticky rice. Prices start from 2,000 Riel (\$0.70). Thailand and Cambodia share the same historical roots dating back to the old Khmer civilisation, which

## Jakarta: A taste of different lands

Most Singaporeans would probably have tried chicken, beef or mutton satay (sate in Indonesia), but what about beef tongue satay? A specialty from Padang, West Sumatra, it is sold for about 20,000 rupiah (\$2) for five to six skewers at the many push carts on the streets of Jakarta.

Other unique offerings include Sate Usus (Chicken Intestines Satay) and Sate Torpedo. Made from the testicles of goat, Sate Torpedo is said to improve men's energy and sexual stamina.

Jalan Jaksa and Jalan Sabang, just south of Merdeka Square, are two addresses that offer plenty of yummy choices for travellers.

Kue Cubit ("pinch cake"), has a Dutch cousin by the name of poffertjes. Around 4cm in diameter, the Kue Cubit is usually sold near schools and traditional markets.

For travellers who love Thai and Vietnamese cuisines but find them a tad too spicy, chances are you would find the food in Cambodia more palatable.

Thailand and Cambodia share the same historical roots dating back to the old Khmer civilisation, which

In Jakarta, you can find siew mai made of tuna, mackerel and prawn instead of pork, and Roti Bakar, thick toast topped with anything from condensed milk and banana to cheese and ice cream.

Even the homegrown Indomie instant noodle, sold for 5,000 rupiah a bowl in its most basic no-frills form, has been evolving to keep with the times. It has been made into doughnuts, burgers, tiered cakes and more recently, onigiri (Japanese rice ball). The onigiri, which costs 10,000 rupiah each, is the latest social media food fad after jumbo-sized Bakso Bola (meatball).

## Siem Reap: Khmer and French food on the cheap

For travellers who love Thai and Vietnamese cuisines but find them a tad too spicy, chances are you would find the food in Cambodia more palatable.

One popular snack is bamboo sticky rice. Prices start from 2,000 Riel (\$0.70).

manifest not just in their languages, but also in their food cultures. The influence of French food (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were once part of French Indochina) can also be felt and tasted on the streets of Siem Reap.

In Siem Reap, you can get a good, old crusty Num Pang, the Cambodian version of the Vietnamese Banh Mi, for 2,500 Riel.

Roadside peddlers in Cambodia sell freshwater snails by the bucket or the cup. These

chewy gastropods are usually seasoned with chili sauce, garlic and salt.

Balut, a bird embryo (usually a duck) that is boiled and eaten out of the shell, can also be found on the streets of Siem Reap. If you can stomach the fertilised embryo – sometimes complete with body parts like eyes, beaks and feathers – then skewers of deep-fried worms, insects, spiders and scorpions should be no problem.

Take a stroll down the alleys of the popular Pub Street Night Market and you can easily find street vendors selling the crunchy critters, which form a part of the Cambodians' diets

during the famine years in the late 1970s.

For US\$1, you can get a packet of fried maggots, a skewer of two to three crickets or one palm-sized tarantula. The spiders that are hunted and eaten in Cambodia are the edible Thai Zebra Tarantula species. They are believed to have medicinal properties and thought to be able to help relieve knee, back and breathing ailments.

The most popular way to cook the spiders is to season them with soy sauce, garlic, salt and sugar, and to fry them until crispy. But for many Cambodians, "apin", as they are known in Khmer, are considered expensive treats reserved for special occasions.



*Many a trip continues long after movement in time and space have ceased*  
John Steinbeck

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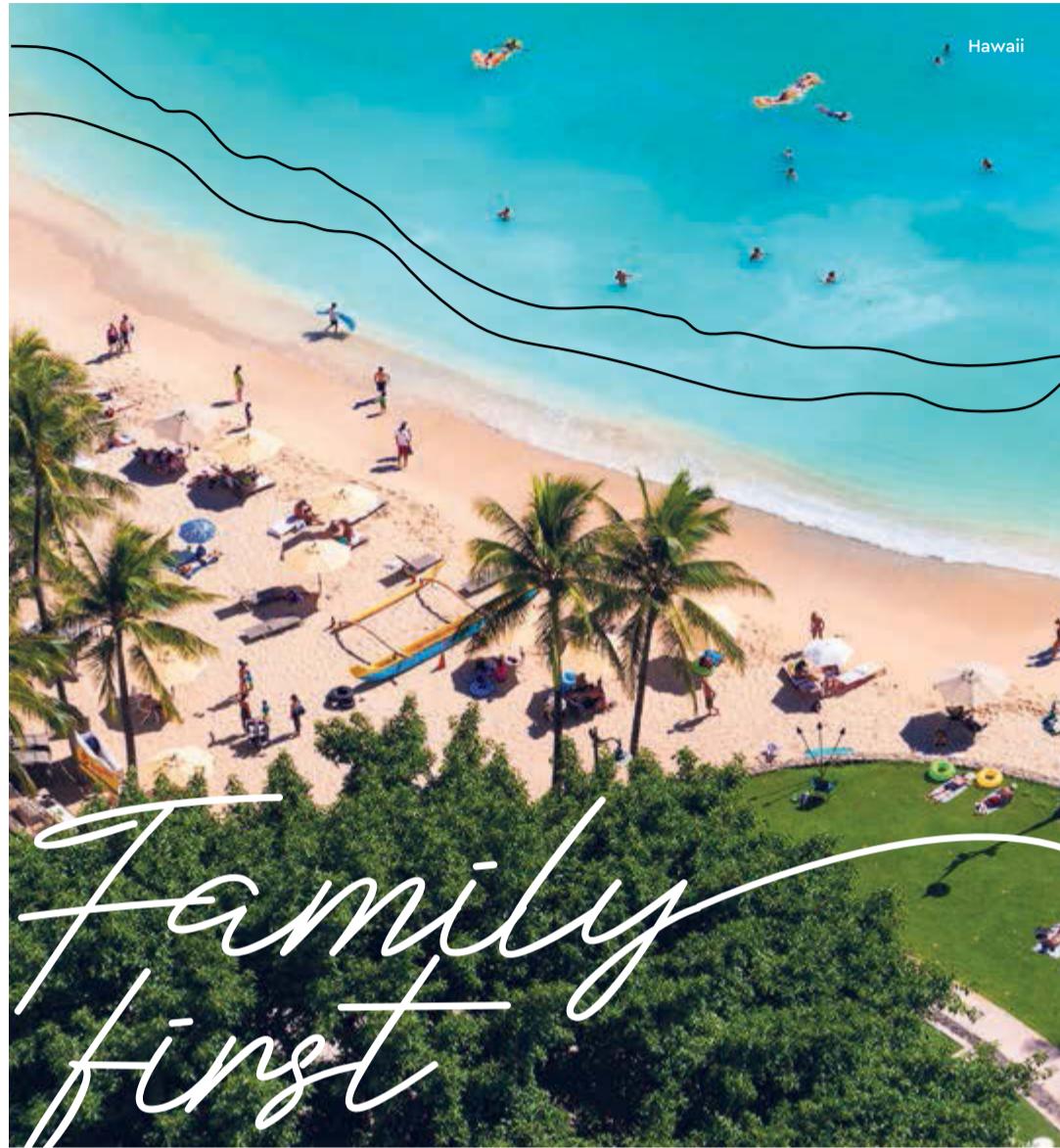
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Planning family holidays is never easy. You have to take in the different needs and preferences of your loved ones. These destinations offer an "all-inclusive" travel experience that will cater to grandparents, the young-at-heart and the baby of the household.

### Hawaii: In awe of Mother Nature

Scientists say experiencing awe in nature fills our hearts with gratitude. What better way to experience that than to visit Hawaii, a volcanic archipelago whose landscape is constantly being moulded by the formidable forces of Nature?

Head to the famous Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on Hawaii Island, which reopened its gates in September 2018, three months after it was shuttered by the eruption of Kilauea, one of the most active volcanoes on earth. Now that the skies have cleared, the island looks set to welcome hordes of travellers again, especially after making it onto CNN Travel's 19 Places to visit in 2019 list.

Over at Maui Island, the clear waters at Kaanapali Beach is perfect for those with active teenagers, offering activities like snorkeling, scuba diving and snuba, a mix between snorkeling and scuba.

The beach also offers one of the world's most stunning sunset views. If you are lucky or you visit during the right season (December to May), you may even catch a glimpse of a whale from the shore.

For history buffs, Pearl Harbor is a must-see. Travel back in time with a visit to the military base where fates were sealed on Dec 7, 1941, the day the Japanese launched a surprise air attack and plunged the US into World War II. The rest, as they say, is history.



### Hokkaido: A slice of Japanese culture

A trip to Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost and second-largest island, will allow tourists travelling as a family a chance to bond over Japanese history, culture and food.

Check into a hot spring resort in the city of Noboribetsu, home to not one, but nine types of hot springs with different healing properties.

The month of May is a good time to see cherry blossom, with the Edo Period Matsumae Castle surrounded by the delicate pink flowers forming the perfect backdrop for family photographs.

The Japanese tradition of hanami (literally translates to "looking at flowers") has inspired poets for centuries. Having a picnic under branches laden with blossom and joining a haiku poetry appreciation session will make your family vacation truly unforgettable.

At Hakodate's wholesale market, there are more than 200 food stalls and eateries to suit every palate in the family. A must-try is the uni ikura don (rice bowl dish with sea urchin and salmon roe).

Fussy eaters may refuse to touch fruit and vegetables at meal times, but they'll not want to miss the chance to harvest vegetables, strawberries, melons, grapes and apples from the farms. Hopefully, the hands-on experience can change their minds — and diets.

At the popular Shiroi Koibito Park in Sapporo, children can make their own Shiroi Koibito cookies at the Cookiecraft Studio and try other kid-friendly activities. For parents and grandparents, the smiles on their little ones' faces will make any trip worthwhile.



### Cairns: Marvel at two Unesco sites

The Great Barrier Reef is why families choose Cairns.

The Unesco World Heritage site in northern Queensland is a true wonder of nature. Both adults and kids can snorkel along this reef that stretches on for more than 2,000km, where thousands of coral reef and fish species can be found.

Those who prefer to stay dry can make a day trip to Kuranda, a mountain village 25km north-west of Cairns and nestled in the natural beauty of the Wet Tropics of Queensland, a World Unesco site made up largely of tropical rainforests.

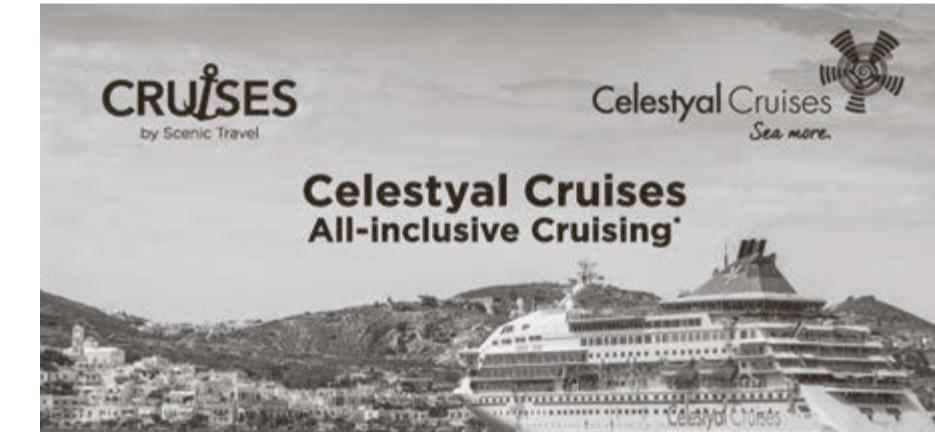
The Kuranda Scenic Railway and the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway offer the family enjoyable ways to explore the sights, smells and sounds of the world's oldest tropical rainforest.

Those with young children may want to consider Kuranda Koala Gardens, where visitors can get up close with some of Australia's most unique wildlife: koalas, kangaroos, wallabies and wombats.

Wherever you go, go with all your heart  
Confucius

Another popular spot in the area are the Atherton Tablelands, a fertile plateau in Queensland that is home to plantations, farms and wineries. The area boasts many natural attractions including waterfalls, swimming holes and crater lakes.

It is also widely regarded as the hot air balloon capital of the world because it enjoys good weather all year round.



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